

ABSTRACT

Title of Document:

**THE CHANGING ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES
IN URBAN SCHOOLS: PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN
RESOURCES LEADERS IN THE RECRUITMENT
AND RETENTION OF QUALITY TEACHERS AND
PRINCIPALS**

Darlene Merry, Doctor of Education, 2014

Directed By:

Dr. Carol S. Parham, Department of Counseling,
Higher Education, and Special Education

Educators and policymakers have faced persistent challenges in closing achievement gaps between low-income and minority students in urban school districts and their peers with greater financial resources and from majority backgrounds. Human Resources Leaders must work to ensure that they are implementing strategic actions that will result in recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers and principals in our most disadvantaged school districts. This qualitative study examines the perceptions of three Human Resources Leaders from urban school districts engaged in a cohort learning experience about strategic actions they have implemented to improve teacher and leader quality in their school districts. The cohort experience, with the pseudonym of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, involved ten school districts in a learning experience over a three-year period of time. The findings from this study identify the high impact

actions of three Human Resources Leaders from urban school districts engaged in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.

Data was gathered through the use of a case study methodology using purposeful sampling to identify the Human Resources Leaders in the project who met a set of criteria based on years in their positions, implementation level of the work of the Project, and their leadership experiences outside of the educational field. The Odden Framework for Strategic Management of Human Capital provided a construct through which the strategic actions of the Human Resources Leaders could be examined.

Findings from this study revealed that there was evidence to suggest that Human Resources Leaders' strategic actions were aligned with the Odden framework. The Human Resources Leaders indicated that having a clear district goal and strategy drives the work of Human Resources to design the roles of high quality teachers and principals and select candidates who have the competencies and motivations that match the role expectations; they identified numerous strategies for recruitment and retention that are promising in urban school districts; and having a context that supports strong selection, performance management, and compensation of high quality candidates will improve the conditions for students in urban school settings.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN URBAN SCHOOLS:
PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCES LEADERS IN THE RECRUITMENT
AND RETENTION OF QUALITY TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

By

Darlene Merry

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2014

Advisory Committee:
Dr. Carol S. Parham, Chair
Dr. Helene Kalson Cohen
Dr. Dennis M. Kivlighan Jr.
Dr. Nelson Mcleod
Dr. Robert Croninger

© Copyright by
Darlene Merry
2014

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my husband, Carl, who has always been the biggest supporter and cheerleader in my education, in my work, and in my life. He has listened to my angst and to my joy for over 35 years in public education. Through his commitment and willingness to be a full partner in our marriage, he has provided the strength that I needed when I wavered. He is my best friend, and now that this work is done, the best is yet to come.

I also dedicate this work to the other man in my life, my son Jake. He has heard me say so many times, “You can be anything you want in this world IF you work hard enough.” I said that so many times as he was growing up, and in the past few years of completing this work, he has been the one saying it to me. I pray that he values education as much as I do and continues to seek out his dreams. He can be anything he wants to be in this world.

I would like to thank my father, Jim Peelman, who is one of the real reasons I completed this work. He relentlessly asked me about when I was going to finish my degree, and I think I partly did it to make him stop asking me. He did not let this dream of mine wither away, and for that I am grateful. He is a brilliant man who gets what it takes to motivate me. Mom would have been proud.

I am so appreciative for my sister, Karen, and my brothers Jeff and Jimmy who have all demonstrated persistence in their education and served as role models for me. They are true supporters and best of friends.

Dr. Carol Parham has served as the protagonist and antagonist in my journey to complete this work, and I truly credit her with the fact that I actually finished. Without her unwavering guidance and high expectations, this would not have happened. Every doctoral student needs a strong supporter at the university, and I was blessed to have her. Now, she is a friend, and for that I am grateful.

I am thankful to the University of Maryland and the members of my team, Dr. Parham, Dr. Dennis Kivlighan, Dr. Helene Cohen, Dr. Nelson Mcleod, and Dr. Robert Croninger. In particular, I am thankful for Dr. Kimberly Holmes for her insight and calm feedback along the way. She was able to keep me on track and focused on the light at the end of the tunnel. Also, Porsha Yasmin Childs was extremely helpful in guiding me through the process. These are two of the brightest women I have worked with, and I appreciate their encouragement, expertise, and consummate care about excellence. Additionally, I appreciate my cohort members who have completed their studies and will complete them in the future. They pushed my thinking during our coursework together in ways that they can’t imagine, and they made me a better associate superintendent in our school district because of the way they made the work so real.

Finally, I thank all of my colleagues who I had the honor to work with throughout the years. You have been an inspiration to teachers, principals, and district leaders in ensuring that all students receive the high quality education they deserve. In particular, I thank Dr. Elizabeth Arons who has involved me in deep, constructive work at this point in my career, and to Danielle Pickens who has been a tremendous thought partner. Finally, I thank the three subjects of this study who are the true reform leaders in the field of Human Resources and who toil relentlessly for those students who truly need them the most. You are the heroes of this story.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction/Context	1
Overview.....	1
Teacher/Principal Quality	3
Teacher/Principal Quality in Urban Districts.....	6
Evolution of Human Resources and Human Capital Management	8
Statement of the Problem	10
The "Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project"	11
Purpose of the Study	13
Research Questions.....	13
Conceptual Framework.....	14
Potential Significance	15
Limitations	16
Definitions of Key Terms	16
Organization of the Study	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review	20
Overview	
Definition of Urban Schools	21
The Need for Reform in Urban Districts	21
The Role of Effective Teachers/Principals in Student Achievement	22
The Challenges of Recruiting and Retaining Effective Teachers and Principals in Urban Schools	23
Teacher Quality: The Role of Teachers in Student Achievement	25
Distribution of Teachers in Urban Schools	27
Principal Quality: The Role of the Principal in Student Achievement	28
Differentiated Role for the Principal in Urban Schools	31
Traditional Human Resources Moves to More Strategic Work	32
Overview of the Key Work in Human Resources	32
A Shift Toward More Strategic Work	32
Performance Measures for Human Resources Departments	34
The Strategic Functionality of Human Resources Work	35
Recruitment	35
Selection/Placement	36
Induction/Mentoring	36
Professional Development	37
Performance Management	37
Compensation	39
A Framework for Human Resources Improvement	39
The Odden Framework	40

Chapter 3: Methodology	46
Overview	46
Methodology	47
Research Design	47
Rationale for Case Study Design	49
Research Questions	50
Participants	50
District Profiles	51
Site Selection	52
Informed Consent	53
Confidentiality	53
Data Collection	54
Interviews	54
Document Analysis	55
Data Analysis	56
Coding Structure	58
Limitations	58
Role of Researcher and Trustworthiness	59
Summary	60
Chapter 4: Findings.....	62
Introduction.....	62
School District Profiles.	64
Site Selection Description	65
Participant Profiles	68
HR Leader A.	68
HR Leader B	70
HR Leader C	71
Findings	73
Theme 1: A Clear Statement of Improved Organizational Performance	74
Theme 2: A Clear Organizational Strategy	78
Themes 3 and 4: Designing Roles and Competencies to Execute the Strategy.....	80
Theme 5: Strategies for Talent Acquisition.....	83
Summary of Findings	89
Chapter Summary	89
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Implications, and Recommendations.....	91
Overview	91
Discussion of Findings	95
Clarity of Organizational Goals and Primary Strategy	96
Role Design for the Teacher and Principal in Urban Districts	97
Varied Strategies for Improving Recruitment and Retention	98
Context Matters	100
Influence of Background Experience and Training	102
Implications for Policy and Practice	104
Recommendations for Future Research	107
Conclusion	108
Appendices	9
Bibliography	112

List of Tables

Table I: Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project	
District Profiles	51, 64
Table 2: Human Resource Leaders - Criterion Sampling Summary	67

List of Figures

Figure 1: Themes in Odden (2011) Framework	41
Figure 2: Framework for Strategic Management of Human Capital	44

Chapter 1: Introduction/Context

Overview

Public education systems in the United States are often lauded for providing opportunities for all students to learn and succeed as graduates. However, educators and policymakers have faced persistent challenges in closing achievement gaps between low-income and minority students and their peers with greater financial resources and from majority backgrounds. Many reform efforts such as *No Child Left Behind* (2001) have largely focused on developing standards and assessments for students; however, in recent years, researchers and education policy organizations have placed greater emphasis on the performance of teachers and principals as a critical contributor to student achievement. Groups have been formed to support the growth of urban superintendents, chief academic officers, and leaders in technology and operations, but an overlooked group has been those leaders focused on improving Human Resources work in urban settings. The evolution of Human Resources in urban school settings is a key component of closing the achievement gap.

There has been increased interest from policymakers, educators, and education researchers in ways to ensure that highly effective teachers and principals are placed in schools that need their talents most, and much focus has been on urban education. In the past, the definition of ‘urban’ was confined to the number of people living in concentrated areas of poverty where there were urbanized areas of 50,000 or more people or urban clusters of at least 25,000 people and less than 50,000 people in an area (Census Bureau). The definition was focused on specific numbers of people and did not take into account other implications that affect urban public

school education. When discussing urban schools districts in more current reform efforts, the complexity of defining urban school settings has lead researchers to include a much wider definition, which encompasses poverty, diversity, population, density, cultural and institutional resources, and social stress and dislocation (Portin et al., 2009).

Schools in major metropolitan areas with high concentrations of low-income and minority students (urban districts) often have significantly lower standardized test scores and higher dropout rates than schools in suburban and rural areas (NAEP, 2012). These districts also have challenges recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and principals (CPRE, 2009; Levin & Quinn, 2003). There is a growing interest in developing strategic Human Capital efforts to recruit and retain high quality teachers and principals in these districts.

Findings of this study are based on information from urban school districts engaged in a program to develop their Human Capital efforts and resources, and this has been a rare opportunity to focus on the area of Human Resources in the urban school setting. A three-year project that has focused on building the capacity of a set of Human Resources Leaders has provided an opportunity to examine the perceptions of these leaders as change agents for improving the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals. Specifically, this study was intended to examine these districts' implementation of strategic Human Capital practices that impact teacher and principal quality. This study was informed by three bodies of work: (a) Teacher and Principal Quality, (b) Strategic Human Capital Management in Education, and (c) Urban Reform Efforts. All three research areas contributed to a

more nuanced understanding of policies and practices that will enable urban districts to recruit and retain quality teachers and principals.

Teacher/Principal Quality

Teachers and Principals serve as key levers of change at the local school level and strongly influence the academic achievement of students. A number of researchers have linked teaching and school leadership to student performance (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rice 2010). Leithwood and associates (2004) suggested that the influence of the principal is second only to the classroom teacher in student achievement, and in their research found that the teacher accounted for thirty three percent of student achievement gains (Leithwood et al., 2004). Considering the essential role of teacher and principal quality in improving student outcomes, reform efforts to improve teacher and principal quality have been implemented across the country with the most acute need in urban school districts.

Acknowledging the role of teacher preparation in student success, the Federal *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 required that every teacher working in a public school must be “highly qualified.” This meant that teachers needed to be certified and demonstrate proficiency in their subject matter by having majored in the subject in college, passed a subject-knowledge test, or obtained advanced certification in the subject. Veteran teachers had the additional option of proving their subject-matter expertise through a state-determined, objective and uniform standard of evaluation. This simplistic view of a highly qualified teacher has been debated in the research and most studies have focused on measurable items such as certification, academic

degrees and years of experience. However, these basic identifiers contribute to as little as three percent of the overall student test scores (Education Week, July 8, 2011). Although an overwhelming number of teachers have met the “highly qualified” designation of *No Child Left Behind*, there is little evidence that teacher quality has improved (Center for Public Education, 2009). Recent research indicates that a combination of characteristics may more accurately define teacher quality and, importantly, the extent to which principals can distinguish less-effective and more-effective teachers and be willing to act on the assessment (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2010).

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of teacher quality in student success, the role of the principal was not a focus area in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. To build on *No Child Left Behind*, the Race to the Top legislation was developed in 2009 to promote the following: “Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.” As noted, while teacher quality is the single biggest factor in influencing student achievement, principals account for twenty five percent of a school’s total impact on achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). According to Colvin (2007), leadership has become the issue that is now seen as “a bridge to school reform, capable of linking all other reform strategies.” According to a report by the Rainwater Leadership Alliance (2010), “It is the combination of highly effective teachers with highly capable school leadership that will change outcomes for children in our schools – not one or the other but both.” (p.8). The early results of reform-minded organizations implementing new principal preparation approaches show that students in elementary and middle schools

led for at least three years by principals prepared through the New Leaders for New Schools organization outpaced their peers by statistically significant margins (Martorell, Heaeton, Gates, & Hamilton, 2010).

Teacher and principal quality is also shaped by the preparation for the role, recruitment and selection strategies, placement, professional development, and performance management. To meet the challenge of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom, some states strengthened their traditional teacher preparation programs and developed systems to hold programs accountable. Many schools also introduced induction and mentoring programs to address high attrition rates and improve the practice of their inexperienced teachers. Other states attempted to raise teacher salaries and improve working conditions in an effort to curb early departures. In program evaluations for organizations such as the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a reform-minded charter school organization with a focus on teacher preparation, students' state assessment scores in reading and mathematics have demonstrated statistically significant gains that appear to reduce race and income-based achievement gaps within three years of beginning at a KIPP school (Tuttle et al., 2010). The implementation of specific practices was noted as causing these gains.

Efforts to improve teacher and principal quality at the national level have been met with some skepticism, and have had mixed outcomes for urban districts. Elmore (2003) raised concerns about policies, such as the *No Child Left Behind* Act and the implications of these policies on schools and the leaders who run them. Elmore described two schools he visited, and he indicated that policies designed to improve student achievement actually had an opposite effect, and de-motivated teachers and

school leaders. Elmore wrote: “The problem is not that they haven’t gotten the message. The problem is that the message doesn’t tell them what to do about the problem, other than to ‘get better’.”(Elmore, 2003, p. 34). Therefore, it seems that there is a need for greater direction about improving teacher and principal quality at the district level, and this direction needs to be specific enough for districts to implement reform strategies with quality and to understand those structures, strategies and practices that can make a difference.

Teacher/Principal Quality in Urban Districts

In current research, the definition of urban districts has been expanded to include major metropolitan areas with high concentrations of poverty, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, and high population density (Knapp et al., 2009).

Several researchers have identified differences in the experiences of teachers and leaders in urban districts, compared to their colleagues in suburban and rural areas (Elmore, 2003; Kozol, 2007). In his work related to educational equity, Kozol (2007) reflected with a number of urban school principals about their views of their roles compared to colleagues in other districts. Urban school principals viewed their work as being more focused on management and on meeting test score mandates than their colleagues in suburban schools. Kozol concluded that there are parallel but very different school systems for poor black and brown students than for middle to upper class white children, and principals and teachers in these districts feel the effects of these differences (Kozol, 2007). Elmore (2003) described the unique type of leaders that are needed for urban schools. In essence, these principals must be adaptive and figure out solutions to the compelling student learning problems in their schools.

Elmore continues to express that all of these issues are exacerbated in urban school districts because they often lack the parental support systems that are available in suburban schools.

Research indicates that schools which demonstrate overcoming significant obstacles to improvement, such as urban schools, have often done so when there was a strong leader present to guide the work of changing the school's culture (Duke, 2004; DuFour, 2002; Saphier, 2008; Stein & Curtis, 2010). Existing literature also indicates that effective teachers positively affect the persistence and success of low-income and minority students (Chenoweth, 2007). Although strong teachers and educational leaders benefit all students, low-income and minority students are the least likely to be exposed to them (CPRE, 2009).

Highly effective teachers and leaders are sought by all school districts; therefore, urban districts have faced significant challenges in recruiting and retaining them. Urban schools with the highest needs students (based on free and reduced lunch/poverty statistics) have the lowest performing teachers with the greatest turnover (CPRE, 2009). Current research by The New Teacher Project (TNT, 2012) indicates that each year 10,000 highly effective teachers leave the 50 largest urban school districts while 100,000 low performers stay in these districts. Urban districts also have the greatest difficulty firing incompetent teachers - statistics in Illinois, California and New York show that it can take up to \$300,000 and two or more years to fire even one incompetent teacher (TNT, 2012).

Levin & Quinn (2003) conducted a study of teacher and leader recruitment in urban school districts, and cited specific challenges of these districts in recruiting and

retaining highly qualified/effective teachers and leaders. The authors identified late hiring timelines and inefficient Human Resource processes as reasons why many of the best qualified teachers and leaders chose to accept positions in other districts. Many of the urban districts in the study did not extend job offers to candidates until late into the summer months. Most other districts made their job offers early in the summer months, leaving urban districts with a greater proportion of under-qualified candidates to fill their teaching and leadership positions.

In summary, urban districts have faced chronic teacher and principal quality problems, largely due to high rates of staff turnover and inefficient hiring practices. These districts also face difficulties in eliminating ineffective teachers and administrators. Based on these findings related to teacher/principal recruitment and retention, it is clear that urban districts must utilize aggressive and innovative strategies to staff their schools with high quality, effective teachers and principals (Milankowski & Kimball, 2010; Odden, 2011; Stanton & Matsko, 2010).

Evolution of Human Resources and Human Capital Management

When reviewing the research about Human Capital Management, the early research was focused on having a “highly qualified” teacher in schools (*No Child Left Behind*). There was little written about Human Capital in urban school settings, and even less about the role of the principal related to Human Capital and Human Resources. In the 1980’s, when a standards-based education was the focus of the research (Zabadosky, 2009), much was written about having a standards-based framework for curriculum and instruction. Once again, little was written about the role of the teacher and principal. In 1994, the reauthorization of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) focused on standards for students. There was controversy about the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (Zabadosky, 2009) because the expectation for improving the teaching professional was identified but not supported. In the foreword to the book, *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*, Michael Bennett notes: “Our schools are fundamentally human efforts. However, schools are still dependent on policies, systems and practices that were developed in the middle of the last century.” (Bennett, 2009). Thus, focusing on Human Capital Management is paramount to improving urban education. Over the last ten years, reform efforts such as New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS), The New Teacher Project (TNTP), Teach for America (TFA), and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) have been developed to address the deep need for improving the quality of teachers and principals in urban schools.

Piecemeal reform efforts have been developed, and the U.S. Department of Education began providing funds to state agencies for competitive grants (Zavadsky, 2009). Now, research is showing that strategically managing Human Capital has the potential to bring world-class teachers and principals to schools to support the improvement efforts of school districts (Odden, 2011). This requires structuring Human Resources systems around what teachers and principals need to know and be able to do in order to implement system initiatives (Odden, 2011; Stanton & Matsko, 2010).

Districts are beginning to focus their Human Capital strategies on performance metrics that they can collect, report, and act on, and they are optimizing

results by aligning these performance measures with their Human Capital strategy (Stanton & Matsko, 2010). Principals have just begun to understand their role as an “instructional leader” (Knapp et al., 2010; Murphy, 2009; Platt et al., 2008; Portin et al., 2009; Stein & Curtis, 2010), and now the additional role for the principal to serve as the lead Human Capital Manager of the school is a new concept (Kimball, 2011; Odden, 2011; Stein & Curtis, 2010). The evolution of Human Capital Management in the research has transitioned from a singular focus on teachers meeting basic requirements related to preparation to a more nuanced view of the powerful role of teacher and principal quality being a determinant of student achievement. There is a trend that indicates Human Resources leaders must focus on the following: recruiting the best and brightest into education; staffing high-needs schools; staffing chronic shortage areas such as math, science and technology; changing the teacher turnover data; providing quality professional development; and developing compensation systems that are aligned with performance (Odden, 2011; Kimball, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Human Resources departments in urban school settings are critically important to the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and principals. Traditional strategies in Human Resources have not significantly improved teacher and principal quality in urban districts. There is a trend in the literature that in order to strategically develop Human Capital in education, entire Human Resources systems must be fundamentally restructured and reformed in order to increase student achievement through efforts related to teacher and principal recruitment and retention (Odden, 2011). Therefore, switching to a more strategic Human Capital Management

approach, in line with reform efforts, can help urban systems to recruit and retain teachers and leaders. There is a need for more information about the practices of Human Resource Leaders in improving teacher and principal quality in urban districts.

The “Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project”

In a set of urban school districts across the country, a project has been implemented to support the learning and professional growth of a team of Human Resources Leaders from each district. This project is an effort to support ten school districts into fully incorporating and aligning the work of Human Resources into the strategic improvement efforts of the districts. The project was established in a response to the unique and critical issues that urban school districts face related to the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and principals in order for the work of Human Resources to shift the work from compliance in nature to more fully integrated and strategic work.

For the purposes of this study, this project will be called “The Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.” This program was established to address the unique and crucial issues that urban school districts face, including recruitment, hiring, retention, and performance management. The project operates under the premise that each of these issues can be addressed by more strategic and integrated Human Resources/Human Capital supports. Launched with ten urban districts in 2012, the project was designed as a learning experience to develop school district staff with Human Resources/Human Capital responsibilities. Over a three-year period, The Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project was projected to

help each district's Human Resources/Human Capital division shift to become a more highly strategic, fully integrated, and functional component of its school system, measured by short- and long-term metrics aimed at improving teacher and principal quality.

Because there has not been a group like this formed in the past, a targeted purpose was to build a community of learners who could collaboratively serve as change agents in the area of Human Resources. The project provided a construct to observe and support Human Resources in a unique way and to support the integration of Human Resources into the districts' improvement efforts.

All districts involved with the project are in large, urban settings and have been intensively involved in educational reform. These ten urban school districts were connected through a private grant to become a cohort in the field of urban Human Resources reform. The project is focused on the development of central office leaders with Human Resources/Human Capital responsibilities. Each district is assigned a consultant with expertise in Human Capital Management, as well as a consultant with expertise in data analysis. These consultants provide individualized support for districts involved in the project. Staff and consultants from the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project identify and share best practices that will help these districts implement a range of functions targeted at improving teacher and leader quality to support educational reform. Additionally, there is a rubric that is used as a tool to identify the practices and metrics for each major strategic function for the work of Human Resources.

In summary, the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project links Human Resources/Human Capital teams, where all staff members understand how their roles support every aspect of the urban education reform movement, with sustainable and lasting change in recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and principals. The mission of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project is to build central office capacity through Human Resources' leadership, and to better support system-wide Human Capital Management in high-needs urban districts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of Human Resource/Human Capital Leaders in urban districts actively engaged in the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals. The researcher placed specific emphasis on strategic, high-impact actions that the Leaders implemented which focused on improving teacher and principal quality in their districts. Participants in this study were Human Resource Leaders from districts involved in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project since its inception. Through the perspectives of Human Resources Leaders, this study explored the connection between highly strategic Human Resources actions and improvement of teacher and leader quality in urban schools. The study provides insight into successes and challenges in the implementation of strategic Human Capital reform efforts in these districts.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. From the perspective of Human Resources Leaders in urban school districts, what actions are associated with improved Human Resources practices that led to better teacher and principal quality in rapidly improving urban schools?
2. What do Human Resources Leaders perceive to be high-impact actions in the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals?
3. How do these actions align with larger goals of their districts and the benchmarks/metrics of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project?

These research questions were investigated through a qualitative case study methodology focused on three of the Human Resources Leaders in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. Purposeful sampling was used to identify three participants who (a) have been in their leadership roles for at least a two year period, (b) have actively engaged in implementing the Project's work to date, and (c) have had experience in leadership outside of their current school district. The researcher was interested in investigating how both the stability of leadership during the intervention project impacts the perceptions of Human Resources Leaders as well as the perceptions of Human Resources Leaders who had not had educational backgrounds in order to identify the strategic actions they implemented.

Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the Odden (2011) framework, which suggests that the improved organizational performance (defined by increased student achievement) is the ultimate goal of Human Capital Management. As noted in his work, districts

often define some type of improvement strategy without securing the necessary leadership and teaching talent needed to implement the improvement strategy. Odden asserts that there must be an organizational strategy, focused on improving instruction, that is directly aligned to the metrics and goals of the district (student achievement). He presents a comprehensive framework for transforming traditional Human Resource Management practices into strategic talent management systems to ultimately improve student achievement.

Odden's (2011) organizational strategy is then driven by the following: Role Design, Competencies and Motivation, Strategies for Talent Acquisition, Talent Development and Motivation, and Talent Retention. All of this drives the Design and Execution of Human Capital Management programs at the district and school levels, with particular emphasis on the following: recruitment; selection; induction/mentoring; professional development; performance management; and compensation.

Potential Significance

The findings from this study may add to the knowledge base regarding the role of Strategic Human Capital Management in improving teacher and leader quality. This study may help urban school leaders who drive the work of Human Resources/ Human Capital Management to implement practices and policies that yield the greatest returns in recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals in their districts. Finally, findings from this study may inform the work of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.

Limitations

This study was limited by the district context of the ten school districts involved in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, and only having three Human Resources Leaders represented in the study. The Project is in the second of a three-year implementation plan, and some of the Human Resources Leaders have changed roles during this time period. This study included three of the leaders who have met the following criteria: they have maintained their roles for over two years; they have been actively engaged in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project since its inception; and they have had experience in leadership roles outside of their current district. In some cases, participants had backgrounds in Human Resources outside of the education sector completely. Therefore, the perspectives of these three Human Resources Leaders varied based on their prior work experiences.

The findings of this study were based on the perceptions and perspectives of Human Resource Leaders. Perspectives of other team members, teachers, and principals were not be factored into findings from this study. Finally, the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project is still a relatively new program, in its second year of existence. Therefore, the long-term effects of the strategic Human Capital efforts implemented by participants cannot be observed in this study.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are relevant to strategic management of Human Capital and will be used throughout this study.

Highly Qualified Teacher- Defined by *No Child Left Behind* legislation as “A highly qualified teacher has full certification, a bachelor’s degree, and demonstrates competence in subject and teaching.”

Human Capital- Defined by the Society for Human Resources Management as “the collective knowledge, skills and abilities of an organization’s employees.”

Human Capital Management- Defined by Milanowski and Kimball (2010) as “a term that economists invented to refer to the productive skills and technical knowledge of workers. It includes individuals’ knowledge, skills, and abilities, and the values and motivation they have to apply their skills to the organization’s goals.”

Human Resources- Defined by the Society for Human Resources Management as “The function dealing with the management of people employed within the organization.”

Human Resources Leaders- For the purposes of this study, Human Resources Leaders are defined as Directors and Chief Human Resource Officers with oversight of staff and the strategic human capital work within their districts.

Human Resources Management- Defined by the Society for Human Resources as “The formal structure within an organization responsible for all of the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions, activities and methods related to the management of people.”

Human Resources Metrics- Defined by the Society for Human Resources as “Measurements used to determine the value and effectiveness of Human Resources strategies. Typically includes such items as cost per hire, turnover rates/costs, training

and Human Capital return on investment, labor /productivity rates and costs, benefit costs per employee, etc.”

Teacher Quality- Defined by the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project as “Teacher Quality is determined using multiple measures of student and school data, and a highly effective teacher is one that positively impacts student learning and achievement, usually defined by at least a year’s growth for a year’s time. Specific definitions of effectiveness vary by state and district.”

Principal Quality- Defined by the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project as “Principal Quality is determined using multiple measures of student and school data, and a highly effective principal is one that positively impacts student learning and achievement, usually defined by at least a year’s growth for a year’s time. Specific definitions of effectiveness vary by state and district.”

Performance Management- Defined by The Society for Human Resources Management as “the process of maintaining or improving employee job performance through the use of performance assessment tools, coaching and counseling as well as providing continuous feedback.”

Urban School Districts- Defined by Knapp et al. (2009) as “including poverty (high concentration of young people from low-income families); diversity (a mixture of racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups in school population); population density (many people living in close proximity, though not always easily accessible to one another); cultural and institutional resources (an array of cultural institutions, though not necessarily easily or equitably accessible); and social stress and dislocation.”

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study, a statement of the problem and the research questions, the potential significance of the study, the research limitations, and the definitions of terminology. Chapter 2 includes a review of the critical research about Teacher and Principal Quality, Human Resources and Human Capital Management, and the needs in Urban Education for Teacher and Leader Quality. In addition, Chapter 2 details the conceptual framework informing the study. Chapter 3 outlines the study's design and methodology, including criteria utilized for identifying participants and interview questions. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study based upon a review of the qualitative data from the case study and the analysis of that data. Finally, Chapter 5 presents conclusions from the data, implications for current practice related to Human Capital Management and recommendations for further research. Following this chapter, the appendices will provide helpful information regarding references for this study, tools, and processes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

How to prepare students for the world of the 21st century is one of the most hotly debated topics of our time. Superintendents and educational leaders across the country are expected to think beyond the common core curricula and baseline graduation rates. It is not enough to simply have students graduate; instead, there is a strong need for students to be prepared for the world of work that results in a good job (Clifton, 2011). With unemployment rates reaching new highs in the last ten years, it is particularly important for urban school districts to reconsider how they are educating students and who are the best teachers and principals to lead the educational reforms that are necessary. Haberman (1995) said: “For the children and youth in poverty from diverse cultural backgrounds who attend urban schools, having effective teachers is a matter of life and death.” (p.1).

Students in urban school settings have historically had lower test scores than students in neighboring urban and rural school districts. Schools in major metropolitan areas with high concentrations of low-income and minority students (urban districts) often have significantly lower standardized test scores and higher dropout rates than schools in suburban and rural areas (NAEP, 2012). These districts also have challenges recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and principals (CPRE, 2009; Levin & Quinn, 2003). While pockets of high student learning progress in historically under-achieving schools do exist (Chenoweth, 2007), the prospects for urban students in general is discouraging. Human Resources Leaders in

urban school districts serve an important role in ensuring that urban schools have highly effective teachers and principals in every school and classroom.

Definition of Urban Schools

In the past, the definition of urban schools was set by the Census Bureau as being the number of students attending schools in large cities. However, in more recent research, the concept of what defines urban has changed to include a more nuanced understanding of what it really means to be in an urban setting. Numbers alone do not describe the context. The definition for urban schools has been expanded to include poverty (high concentration of young people from low-income families); diversity (a mixture of racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups in school population); population density (many people living in close proximity, though not always easily accessible to one another); cultural and institutional resources (an array of cultural institutions, though not necessarily easily or equitably accessible); and social stress and dislocation.” (Knapp et al., 2009).

The Need for Reform of Human Resources in Urban Districts

Improving the quality of teachers and principals has been widely identified as a promising direction for improving student achievement in schools (Rivkin et al., 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1998). In the current literature, it is noted that the shortcomings of effective Human Resources is most acute in urban school settings, and there are severe dysfunctions in the areas of having a strategic focus for Human Resources; recruiting the best and brightest to urban schools; staffing high needs schools; filling vacancies in math, science and technology subject areas; compensating teachers and principals, and developing the teachers and principals

once they are placed in urban schools (Odden, 2011). Current research also indicates that an essential component of the foundation for a high-functioning Human Capital management strategy is to have an effective and efficient Human Resources department (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010).

The Role of Effective Teachers and Principals in Student Achievement

Research indicates that effective teachers and principals make a difference with student achievement. Evidence indicates that in individual schools across the country, including schools in urban school districts, there are examples of schools increasing student achievement. However, urban school districts have not taken this increased achievement to scale (Chenoweth, 2008). Teachers and Principals serve as key levers of change at the local school level and strongly influence the academic achievement of students. A number of researchers have linked teaching and school leadership to student performance (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rice 2010). Leithwood and associates (2004) suggested that the influence of the principal is second only to the classroom teacher in student achievement, and in their research found that the teacher accounted for thirty three percent of student achievement gains (Leithwood et al., 2004). Considering the essential role of teacher and principal quality in improving student outcomes, reform efforts to improve teacher and principal quality have been implemented across the country with the most acute need in urban school district settings.

The Challenges of Recruiting and Retaining Effective Teachers and Principals in Urban Schools

Over time, a limited number of reform movements for urban school settings have focused solely on teacher quality, with an even more limited number focused on principal quality. Literature from both the business and educational disciplines indicates that schools need both effective teacher talent and the strategic management of that talent by principals to support and grow the talent (Odden, 2011; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). This premise of teacher and principal quality is particularly important in urban school settings.

New teachers and principals are commonly sent to the most challenging urban schools across the country. Since novice teachers often take, minimally, two to three years to meet an effective standard of performance, the neediest students are taught by these less effective teachers (Schwartz et al., 2010). This is the product of a combination of urban school districts not being able to recruit the most prepared teachers or retain them once they begin. The literature indicates that even if districts could remove low-performing teachers, the only way that the overall quality of teachers improves is if there are enough good and effective teachers to replace them (Futernick, 2010).

In the past ten years, a number of reform-minded non-profit organizations have been developed to address this issue. New Leaders for New Schools, developed in 2000, has focused on providing principals to large, urban schools districts. The mission of New Leaders for New Schools is focused on recruiting, training, and supporting effective principals for urban schools (New Leaders for New Schools,

2013). Additionally, Teach for America and The New Teacher Project began their work around recruiting and preparing non-traditional candidates for the teacher ranks in urban school districts across the country. Their mission is specifically to focus on urban schools. Overall, the goal of these reform groups is to bring in strong, nontraditional candidates from top colleges and universities who can be trained in a specific pedagogy to work in urban school settings for at least a three year period of time. The outcomes from these programs are still mixed, but their success in recruiting new talent is promising (Schwartz et al., 2010, Odden, 2011). Teach for America is one of the largest grantees for the US Department of Education's Investing in Innovation grants, and the research portion of the grant indicates that their graduates achieve the expected amount of student achievement in reading and exceed what veteran teachers achieve with students in mathematics (Mathematica Policy Research, 2004).

Retention of new teachers and principals in urban schools is one issue that the reform organizations have not yet been able to address. For most programs, there is only a requirement that participants stay in their jobs for three years. Studies have found that, even when urban schools are able to recruit and hire effective teachers and principals, these educators often choose not to stay at these more challenging schools over time. In urban school districts, approximately half of all starting teachers leave within the first five years (Schwartz et al., 2010). In these districts, principals must often replace experienced teachers with new and less experienced ones (Malen, 2002). Additional studies have found that many experienced, qualified teachers will not even consider going to challenging, under-performing schools because there is a

stigma associated with working in schools with high turnover and academic challenges (Mintrop, 2004; Roellke & Rice, 2008). It is equally as dire for principal retention at urban schools. In a recent report about first year principals at urban schools with principals trained by New Leaders for New Schools, it was noted that over one-fifth of new principals leave within two years and those new principals who went to schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress were the most likely to leave (Burkhauser et al., 2012). In summary, school reformers continue to try new strategies around recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals in urban school districts; however, they have not yet yielded long-term results in urban districts and the retention of teachers and principals is a serious problem.

Teacher Quality: The Role of the Teacher in Student Achievement

Historically, the definition of a “Highly Qualified” teacher was one of teachers who met the federal mandate related to training, years of service and certification. Now, most teachers fit into this set of qualifications, as the Highly Qualified Teaching provision is considered a minimum requirement of certification. However, there is no reference to the interaction of certification with working conditions such as retention, limited resources in high impact schools, and the stress that is put on teachers for not meeting the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* related to meeting Annual Yearly Progress. In a study of five districts in three states, the Highly Qualified Teacher provision did not explicitly reference the goal of staffing low performing schools (Roellke & Rice, 2008).

The traditional definition of a Highly Qualified Teacher is now considered to be the bare minimum for prospective teachers, and Teacher Quality encompasses

measures beyond inputs of education, training, and years of service. Several measures of teacher quality centered on student achievement are identified in the research base. The components that are highlighted include the importance of preparation for the role, which is often through systems outside of the traditional university and college preparation approach (Ingersoll, 1999; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). Teachers are also expected to have content expertise in the area of teaching (Hanushek, 1996). Finally, teachers are expected to meet and exceed the standards of performance set within the district's evaluation system and meeting the district's quality bar (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Defining 'highly effective' and developing more impactful definitions of teacher quality has proven to be particularly challenging for many districts and their stakeholders. Recent research indicates that there is no single teacher characteristic that indicates whether or not a teacher will be effective, as defined by increases in student achievement; instead, there are a variety of characteristics that more directly affect student achievement (Rothman & Barth, 2009). Rothman and Barth found that certification, generally, was not an indicator of effectiveness although certification such as being National Board Certified had some effectiveness. However, not being certified had a negative effect. Additionally, they found that having subject matter knowledge was highly predictive of teacher effectiveness, but having an advanced degree in the subject made a difference only in secondary education and not in elementary education. Finally, a number of studies have found that experience, as defined by seniority, only matters up into the first four years of a teacher's tenure and

teachers generally hit a plateau (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2006; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kane, 2005; Rockoff, 2004).

The definition of teacher quality and effectiveness is critical to the work of Human Resources and how it drives who are hired and how they are remunerated for their work. School districts often hire for “highly qualified” instead of the newer definition of teacher quality and then their pay scales reflect increases for advanced degrees and seniority which have not been proven to be indicators of teacher effectiveness (Rothman & Barth, 2009).

Equitable Distribution of Teachers in Urban Schools

Equitable school staffing is defined by Plecki et al. (2009) as “investing resources in ways that respond to the unique needs of students, teachers, and schools while maximizing these goals and developing politically sustainable strategies for doing so” and the researchers also indicate that “investing staffing resources equitably – which generally means in a differentiated and ostensibly unequal way – is difficult conceptual work.” (p.iv). The research also shows that teachers who are most effective (defined by their value-added test scores) seldom teach at our most challenging schools nor do they necessarily teach the highest-need grades, subjects or students within the school (Frank & Gordon, 2013).

The importance of hiring the best candidate for the most important roles in an organization has been studied and acknowledged as a key success factor in the business world (Boudreau & Ramsted, 2007; Clifton, 2011; Smart, 2005). Boudreau & Ramstad (2007) describe how essential it is for an organization to understand their “pivotal talent,” which are the roles that can make the greatest difference to the

organization. In fact, they say that many organizations ascribe to the “peanut butter” approach and spread talent the same way across the organization. They also indicate that most organizations make decisions about their people’s talents with little rigor or process.

Urban school districts say that they want the best teachers and principals in their neediest schools, but in many cases, they have not put equitable school staffing practices in place to make this happen. A challenge noted in the literature is that few districts identify or collect metrics that drive equitable distribution of teachers to high needs schools (Hanson & Matsko, 2010). Once teachers can be sorted based on their actual performance, then district leaders can begin to assess how teachers are distributed to both higher and lower performing schools across the district (Hanson & Matsko, 2010). Then, districts can have strategies that are targeted on equitable distribution based on a metric that is driven by a standard of teacher and principal performance and student learning results.

Principal Quality: The Role of the Principal in Student Achievement

Historically, the principal was often considered to be the logistical manager of the schoolhouse. Pressure has increased substantially on schools to improve student achievement results, and there is broad agreement that principals need to be more than just building managers (Portin et al., 2009). The *No Child Left Behind* legislation refocused the work of the principal to leading the teaching and learning at the school, and this shift is well-documented in the literature (Portin et al., 2009). Specifically, principals have additional responsibilities and accountability for instructional leadership, student achievement, and Human Capital Management

(Kimball, 2011; Knapp et al., 2010; Murphy, 2009; Odden, 2011; Platt et al., 2008; Portin et al., 2009; Stein & Curtis, 2010).

Similar to Teacher Quality, there is no clear definition or measures identified in the literature for Principal Quality. However, there are several broad skills contributing to Principal Quality identified in the literature, including strong management and instructional leadership skills (Kimball, 2011; Portin et al., 2009; Stein & Curtis, 2010). It is a relatively new concept that the principal should serve as the instructional leader in schools (Portin et al., 2009; Stein & Curtis, 2010). Even more recent research asserts that the principal implements instructional leadership by managing Human Capital at the school (Kimball, 2011; Stein & Curtis, 2010).

Kimball (2011) directly expands the thinking of the work that the principal needs to do to be an instructional leader with the Human Capital strategic work that needs to occur to implement the strategy. For example, a major instructional task of principals as instructional leaders is to build a shared instructional improvement vision (Marzano, 2003; Murphy et al., 2006; Waters et al., 2003). Kimball asserts that the principal, as a Human Capital leader, would need to recruit and select staff who share this vision. A second example is that principals must monitor curriculum and instruction (Platt et al., 2008; Saphier et al., 2008). In Kimball's model, the principal must manage teacher performance evaluating the teacher and then use the information from the evaluation and student outcome data to manage performance.

There is also limited direction in existing literature related to measuring the effectiveness of principals, particularly in their work related to Human Capital Management, but there is support to suggest that the principal makes a difference in

student achievement and recruiting and retaining quality faculty and staff. A number of researchers have linked school leadership to student performance (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rice, 2010). It is not common at this point in time for districts to hold principals accountable for Human Capital Management; however, this is one measure of their effectiveness (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010).

Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) posed a critical question in their work: To what extent does leadership play a role in whether a school is effective or ineffective? They conducted a meta-analysis, synthesizing a vast amount of research quantitatively. After examining 69 studies involving 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers, the authors found a positive correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal in the school and the average academic achievement of students in the school to be .25 (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

In a Public Impact (2007) study, The Center on Innovation and Improvement produced a framework related to school turnaround leadership. The report was based on fifty nine sources from education, government, business, and non-profit sectors. The research focused on environmental contexts and leadership behaviors related to creating dramatic change in organizations. Although this study was not solely directed at principals in urban schools, the themes from their work have been applied in this context. They identified nine leader actions for successful turnaround (pp. 13-24), including: 1.) Focus on quick wins in the first year; 2.) Find ways to implement what must be done; 3.) Take personal responsibility to identify and utilize, through

action planning, a rich set of data sources; 4.) Identify the need for change and then minimize the instability of necessary staff changes; 5.) Start effective efforts and end unsuccessful efforts – focus resources; 6.) Celebrate successes but stay focused on the larger transformation that is necessary; 7.) Set and communicate a compelling vision; 8.) Understand and communicate the current state from the view of the stakeholders; and 9.) Identify and utilize change agents in your school and silence the negative voice through the demonstration of success.

With new demands for principals to be strong managers, instructional leaders, and leaders of Human Capital, there is evidence that past principal preparation approaches do not address all of these needs (Stein & Curtis, 2010). Therefore, educational administration programs and certifications should be assessed and revised to align to a new set of competencies including Human Capital Management and instructional leadership.

Differentiated Role for the Principal in Urban Schools

Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) identified the capabilities of successful leaders of turnaround schools, which are most often in urban settings, as having the following: a drive for results; ability to problem-solve; demonstration of confidence; exerting influence over others; utilization of team work; demonstration of cooperation; and analytical thinking skills.

Principals in urban districts have also been affected by increased pressures for principals to be accountable for their schools' performance on standardized tests. Because urban districts often score lower than suburban districts, the principals must put in more effort than their peers to meet AYP. The *No Child Left Behind* legislation

placed direct sanctions on schools that did not meet expectations. Principals were expected to lead the changes in the schools, despite the fact that their roles in the past focused more on management rather than instructional leadership (Portin et al., 2009).

Traditional Human Resources Moves to More Strategic Human Capital Work

Traditionally, the work of Human Resources in education has been heavily focused on recruitment of staff, onboarding, and transactional/compliance work, such as reviewing credentials. In recent years, there has been some shifting toward engaging Human Resource departments in more strategic work, aligned with the broader aims and mission of districts.

Overview of the Key Work in Human Resources

In school districts across the nation, it is estimated that 85% of school and district budgets go towards staff salaries and benefits, and the importance of managing people well is essential to the effective use of this resource (Odden, 2011). In education, the most important role of Human Resources is to ensure and direct the talents of teachers and principals in order to improve student learning (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). The work of Human Resources is not separate from other units and initiatives within a district; instead, the most strategic Human Resources management hones in on both identifying and then choosing among the specific Human Resources actions that can achieve the district's strategic objectives (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007).

A Shift Toward More Strategic Work

When reviewing the research about the role of Human Resources in Human Capital Management, the early research was focused on the requirements of the *No*

Child Left Behind legislation to have a “highly qualified” teacher in schools. There was little written about urban school settings, and even less about the role of the principal related to Human Capital Management. In the 1980’s, a standards-based education was the focus of the research (Zabadosky, 2009), and the focus was directly on the standards that students should reach but little about what the teachers and principals needed to know and do to increase achievement. In 1994, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) continued its focus on standards for students. The next steps were taken to move just from the standards for students to standards for teachers. There was controversy about the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (Zabadosky, 2009) because the expectations for improving the teaching professional was identified but not supported. In the foreword to the book *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*, Michael Bennett notes: “Our schools are fundamentally human efforts. However, schools are still dependent on policies, systems and practices that were developed in the middle of the last century” (Bennett, 2009), and thus focusing on Human Capital Management is paramount to improving urban education. Over the last ten years, reform efforts such as New Leaders for New Schools, The New Teacher Project, Teach for American, and Knowledge is Power Program have been developed to address the deep need for improving the quality of teachers and principals.

Outside reform efforts began focusing on Teacher and Principal quality. In 2008, district and state leaders came together as the Strategic Management of Human Capital (SMHC) Task Force to explore the state of Human Capital in public

education and to develop their own reform effort. The group was able to develop a set of principles, but once again the actual work of improving Human Resources was not identified.

Since then, reform efforts have been developed, and the U.S. Department of Education has begun providing funds to state agencies for competitive grants (Zavadsky, 2009). Now, research is showing that strategically managing Human Capital has the potential to bring world-class teachers and principals to schools to support the improvement efforts of school districts (Odden, 2011). This requires structuring Human Resources systems around what teachers and principals need to know and be able to do in order to implement system initiatives as well as using resources effectively. (Odden, 2011).

Performance Measures for Human Resources Departments

The current measures used to assess the performance of Human Resources departments are not clearly developed in the literature. The two that are most commonly used are the percentage of students meeting state standards and the percentage of teachers who are certified under the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). These two metrics are certainly important but they do not guide the improvement of the work in any way. Stanton and Matsko (2010) categorize performance metrics as input measures, output measures, and outcome measures. Stanton and Masko (2010) define input measures as those that “report on resource utilization.” (p.42). Output measures capture activities, and outcome measures describe what was produced. As Human Resources departments move to more strategic work, the literature suggests that all three measures must be developed

and turned into performance metrics. The metrics for Human Resources should be aligned to the improvement metrics of the district.

The Strategic Functionality of Traditional Human Resources Work

The role of Human Resources in school districts has traditionally been defined as being compliance oriented. Human Resources departments ensured that teachers were on boarded and that certification requirements were met. Now, because of the need for improvement in the quality of teachers and principals, the role is expanding to be more strategic in nature. In summary, the highest order strategic Human Resources goal is to ensure that there are a set of Human Resources practices that acquire, professionally develop, and continuously motivate teachers and principals to meet the most critical performance standards (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). The strategies of recruitment, selection/placement, induction/mentoring, professional development, performance management and compensation ensure strategic work in a Human Resources department.

Recruitment

Recruitment, also called Talent Acquisition, is critical to getting the right people into teaching positions and the principalship. Recruitment is broadly defined as the applicant pools that provide sources of applicants as well as information that is provided to applicants about the job's requirements and rewards (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). Districts have realized that the pathway into both the role of the teacher and the principal has been through the traditional route of universities and colleges which are inadequate to fill both the needs for the number of teachers they need as well as the need for teachers who understand the urban context (Berry et al.,

2010). Examples of recruiting in additional ways have occurred through programs such as Teach for America, The New Teacher Project, and New Leaders for New Schools. Additionally, current research supports the development of Urban Teacher Residencies which would provide a pathway that is focused on a premise that new teachers in urban schools require guidance in strategies that will produce student achievement in urban schools as well as guided practice, over time, to learn the strategies (Berry et al., 2010).

Selection/Placement

Selection/Placement is defined in the literature as the licensure that is necessary for the role, the assessments that are accomplished to assess the job applicants' knowledge and skills to predict future performance as well as the standards that are the hiring requirements and any necessary baseline scores that the applicants must meet (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). In addition to this definition, there is recent research to indicate that there must be clear job descriptions written for roles that align with the strategic work of the district (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2009; Odden, 2011). For example, if the district is focusing on improvement in reading, the job descriptions for teachers and principals would reflect a deep knowledge base in this area.

Induction/Mentoring

Induction and Mentoring are often considered to go hand-in-hand in the work of Human Resources. Induction is that work that happens pre-service for the teacher and principal with assistance and information prior to beginning the role as well as on-the job assistance during the first year. Mentoring can be differentiated by

including the content that the teacher and principal need to know as well as having a qualified person providing the mentoring (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007).

Professional Development

In earlier literature, professional development was primarily considered training that occurred at special events that teachers and principals attended (Guskey, 2000). Professional development now has a more expansive definition. Guskey (2000) indicates that professional learning of any kind needs to go beyond simple delivery, which is what is often found in teacher and principal preparation programs. Now, the professional development is much more about how teachers and principals learn together to solve perplexing student learning problems. Guskey focuses on how to evaluate this type of professional development, and he indicates that there are three purposes for evaluating professional development: planning for learning, formative assessment and summative learning. He describes the guidelines for what takes place before professional development activities begin. Planning evaluation gives the program developers and implementers a precise understanding of what is to be accomplished, what procedures will be used, and how success will be determined. The following elements are considered crucial to successfully implemented professional development: clarify the intended goals; assess the value of the goals; analyze the context; estimate the program's potential to meet the goals; determine how the goals can be assessed; and outline strategies for gathering evidence.

Performance Management

Performance Management is broadly considered the system for appraising a teacher or principal's performance. It additionally consists of the feedback and

coaching that the teacher/principal receives as well as goal setting and any kind of remediation (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). In the past, most performance management systems involved an evaluation form that had a single scale such as “satisfactory” or “needs improvement” with a checklist of actions (Danielson, 2000). Now, the evaluation systems are much more focused on assessing teacher performance against a set of standards (Danielson, 2000; Saphier, 2008). School districts are increasingly adding a component of value-add to teacher performance appraisals, and this has raised many questions during the implementation phase. In urban districts, union leadership and often teachers in general have disagreed with the approach (Abrams & Madaus, 2003; Egan, 2003; Pedulla, 2003).

Principal assessments are not a new practice, but they have typically consisted of the principal determining a goal and putting in place action plans which are not tied to principal performance. Now, the Interstate School Licensure Consortium has identified a set of leadership standards with an examination of performance. The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership Education (VAL-ED) is a tool that has been developed to assess principals, and the results have varied greatly with respect to how much the principal focuses on the managerial work of the schools or on student learning outcomes (Portin et al., 2009). Through examining teachers and principals against a standard of performance, the district leaders can determine which staff should have a plan for removal, which staff need continuous developmental support, and which staff should be utilized in teacher and principal leadership roles (Stanton and Matsko, 2010).

Compensation

Finally, compensation is the base pay, any supplements on top of the base pay, and the entire hiring package that a teacher or principal receives (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). States such as Florida, Minnesota, and Texas have provided over \$550 million to incentive pay programs that reward teacher performance, and the federally provided funding in the Teacher Incentive Fund quadrupled in 2010 (Springer & Gardner, 2010). Recent research indicates that traditional ways of compensating teachers for years of service and advanced degrees do not correlate with improved student learning as thought of in the past (Frank et al., 2013; Rothman & Barth, 2009).

A Framework for Human Resources Improvement

There are several frameworks for Human Capital Management that can inform the work of improving Human Resources (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden, 2011). These frameworks account for the role of specific Human Resources functions that are most relevant at distinct points in the careers of teachers and principals (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010), and qualities necessary for districts and their employees to meet performance goals (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2007).

Although these frameworks provided valuable insight into traditional Human Resource practices, they lacked a more comprehensive context of Human Capital Management within the goals and improvement strategy of a school district. Clearly, these frameworks provide components of a complete framework that are key to the success of urban school district Human Capital improvement with the Curtis and Wurtzel (2010) framework providing valuable insights into the importance of specific

Human Resources functions. Also, the Boudreau & Ramstad (2007) framework provides a valuable perspective of the importance of ensuring each critical role in the organization is driven by the most important work and metrics that the organization identifies. The framework that drove this study marries these two major pieces of research.

The Odden Framework

This researcher identified the Odden Framework (Odden, 2011) as the one that marries the organizational goal and strategy, the ways that roles must be designed, as well as strategies for both recruitment and retention within the context of the school district work. Odden (2011) suggests that in order to achieve the major improvements needed in school districts, the Human Capital Management approach must focus on the key systems to recruit, train, hire, induct, deploy, develop, retain and strategically manage effective talent. He identified the following major problems with typical Human Capital systems:

1. There is a lack of a clear strategy for Human Capital and the practices that support that strategy;
2. There is difficulty in staffing high needs (i.e., high-poverty and low achieving schools in urban areas);
3. There is high teacher turnover, particularly in urban districts;
4. There is an ongoing shortage of qualified math, science, and technology teachers, particularly in urban districts;

5. Districts that have difficulty recruiting the best teachers to their district and they often do not use non-traditional methods such as Teach for America or The New Teacher Project;
6. Systems that spent \$6,000 - \$8,000 per teacher for professional development that have had little or no impact on student achievement; and
7. Compensation systems that reward teachers and principals for years of service rather than for linking the compensation to a value-add metric.

Below is an outline of the themes in the framework as well as the descriptors of each category. Themes in the Odden framework encompass both the Curtis & Wurtzel (2010) framework that focuses on performance management as well as the Boudreau and Ramstad (2007) framework that focuses on Impact, Effectiveness, and Efficiency, thus making it a comprehensive framework approach.

Figure 1: Themes in Odden (2011) Framework

Theme	Descriptor
Improved Organizational Performance	Student Achievement
Organizational Strategy	Improved Instruction
Role Design	Expectations of What Key Roles Need to Do to Execute the Strategy
Competencies and Motivation	The Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Key Role Holders
Strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent Acquisition • Talent Development and Motivation • Talent Retention 	The Specific Strategies for How Candidates are Hired, Developed, and Retained Over Time
Context	State Policy, Teacher Associations, External Labor Market, Colleges and Universities

Design and Execution of Human Capital Management at District and School Levels	Strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Selection/Placement • Induction/Mentoring • Professional Development • Performance Management • Compensation
--	---

Odden (2011) and Odden and Kelly (2008) organized the aforementioned themes into a framework that show the interaction of both transactional and strategic work taking place simultaneously. Specifically, Odden (2011) indicates that understanding the goal of the district is critical to ensuring that all of the work of human resources is aligned to that goal. Thus, all of the arrows of improvement for teacher and principal quality are headed towards the same outcome of increased student achievement. Each school district has a specific instructional strategy or set of strategies being implemented. For example, if instructional improvement in reading is the specific strategy, then principals and teachers who have the knowledge base and set of skills in this area and can prove their knowledge base would be recruited and selected and/or the professional development in the district would focus on this skill development.

Then, the roles would be designed to hire for what the district is trying to improve upon. So, to continue the example, if the district was focusing on instructional strategies focusing on improvement in the area of reading, the job descriptions would be written to describe the job abilities related to this strategy and the competencies needed would describe this focus area. Then, the selection process would hone in on proof of knowledge base and experience in this area. The district would be strategic about developing and retaining the teachers and principals who

meet the qualifications. Also, the district would focus their professional development in this area and assess that professional development against a metric (Guskey, 2000).

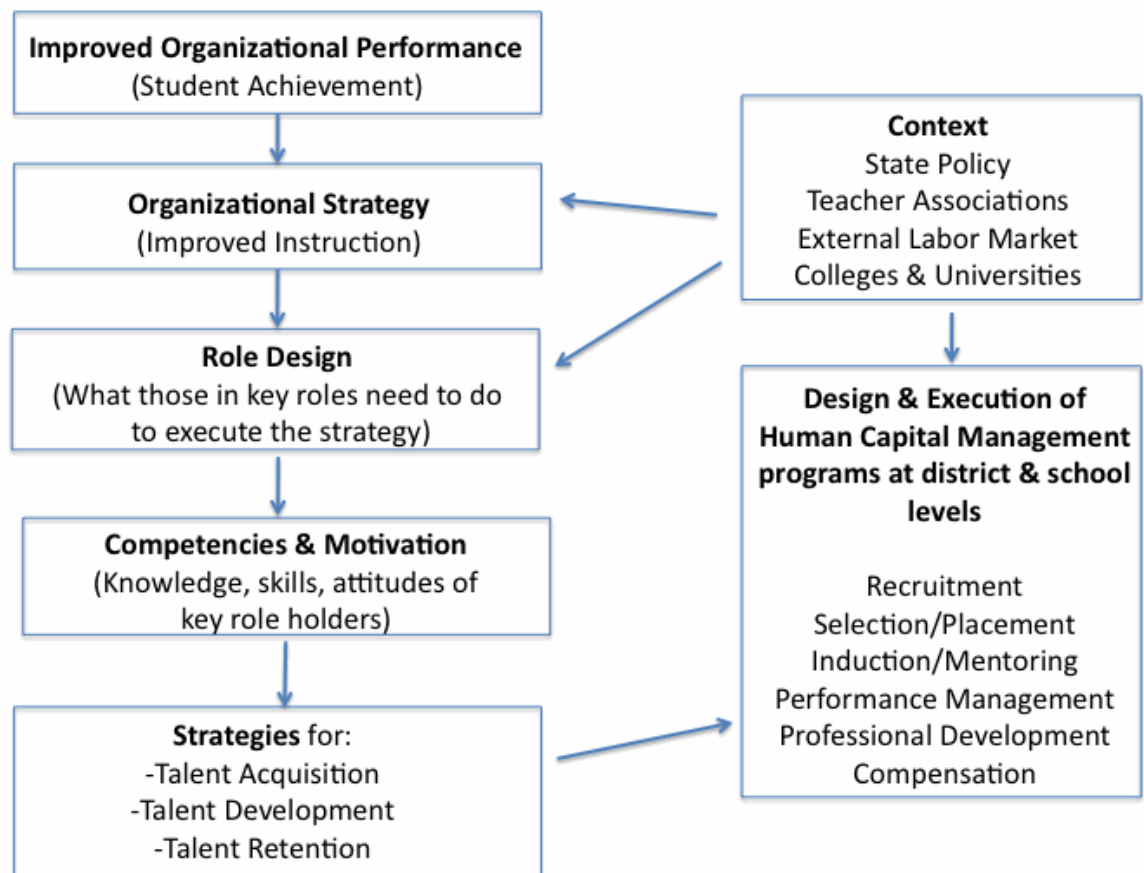
In this framework, there is also a necessary link with the context of the particular district. As identified in this study, the context of the urban school setting is different than a suburban school district, and factors affecting the selection and retention of teachers and principals in urban districts would be considered. For example, urban school teachers must demonstrate a different type of persistence about student learning and the principals must put in place systems to protect the learners and their learning environment (Haberman, 1995; Luebchow, 2009; Portin et al., 2009).

Finally, the traditional work of Human Resources is included in Odden's framework, including the major functions of recruitment, selection and placement, induction/mentoring, performance management, professional development, and compensation. These are critical Human Resources functions consistently identified in the literature (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Heneman & Milanowski, 2007; Odden, 2011; Stanton and Matsko, 2010).

As noted, the framework that Curtis & Wurtzel (2010) presented served an essential purpose of focusing on the key work of Human Capital Management. The Boudreau & Ramstad (2007) framework, developed from a business model for improving the work of Human Capital Management, also served the important purpose of identifying how organizations must focus on key strategic work. Then, they must select, support, and remunerate the right candidates for the right positions in order to get results. This researcher found the Odden framework (2011) to pull the

components together for a comprehensive framework for improving Human Capital Management in urban school districts.

Figure 2: Framework for Strategic Management of Human Capital (Odden, 2011; Odden & Kelly, 2008)



This model provided insight into factors that Human Resource Leaders must consider in the recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals in urban districts. It also supports strategies and best practices in strategic management of Human Capital identified in the literature. Odden indicated, through his use of

arrows flowing from top to bottom on the left side of his framework, that all work in Human Resources is back-mapped to the student achievement goal in the district. He suggests that all work in Human Resources was transactional in nature and now must be strategic and aligned directly and intentionally to the performance metrics for student achievement in the district. The framework informed the interview protocols and data analysis detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

The central purpose of this study was to examine and identify Human Resources Leaders' perceptions about the strategic actions they implemented which are associated with a strong focus on the improvement in teacher and leader quality. For the purposes of this study, the term "Human Resources Leader" referred to the person in charge of the Human Resources/Human Capital Management office/department in the school district. Ten school districts engaged in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project were the broad population for the study with a narrowing to three districts that are most fully implementing the program. The districts selected have Human Resources Leaders who have met criteria based on having been in their leadership roles for at least a two year period, having actively engaged in implementing the Project's work to date, and, finally, having had experience in leadership outside of their current school district and preferably in the business world. The interviewer was interested in hearing the perceptions of business leaders who had taken on these roles of Human Resources Leaders to identify the strategic actions they were implementing and to hear their thoughts about how their business background has impacted their work. Three case studies were developed and then a cross-case analysis was accomplished to look for themes and patterns that identify emerging trends for improving teacher and leader quality.

This chapter includes information about the methodology of the study; the research design, including the rationale for the case study design and research

questions; the participants, including district profiles, site selection, informed consent and confidentiality; the data collection process, including the interview process and document analysis; and the data analysis approach, including the coding structure. Additionally, this chapter highlights the limitations of the study and the researcher trustworthiness.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative case study with a purposeful sampling which sought to examine perceptions of a set of Human Resource Leaders from urban school districts, as they pertain to strategic, high-impact actions that they implemented which focused on improving teacher and leader quality in their districts. Ten districts involved in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project were reviewed and three districts were selected for the study. Three separate case studies were developed for a cross-case analysis to look for patterns across districts. This study was informed by the following: (a) research on teacher and leader quality (b) the evolving role of Human Resources in recruiting, selecting, placing, and supporting performance management of teachers and leaders, and (c) emerging research on the need for change in the role of Human Resources in urban school settings. By showing the direct relationship of highly strategic Human Resources actions to the improvement of teacher and leader quality, this study shows the connection of accomplishing strategic work with improvement of teacher and leader quality.

Research Design

A case study methodology was utilized because it enabled the researcher to consider multiple sources of data and examine the context of each of the districts.

The researcher reviewed demographic data and profiles of Human Resources Leaders from the ten districts in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, and then utilized purposeful sampling to identify three participants. Ideal participants had (a) been in their leadership roles for at least a two year period, (b) actively engaged in implementing the Project's work to date, and (c) experience in leadership outside of their current school district (including experiences outside of the education sector). These criteria were selected in order to interview Human Resources Leaders who had the time to implement the strategies taught in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project and who also had perspectives of leadership practices outside of an urban public school setting. Having the time to implement was important to see if more time allowed the leaders to implement more strategies in a deeper manner. The experience outside of the school district was interesting to see if the Human Resources Leaders perceived this experience as helpful or a hindrance.

In-person interviews were held based on a set of open-ended questions related to the Odden (2011) Human Capital framework (Appendix B). Questions centered on themes of Organizational Strategy, Role Design, Competencies and Motivations, Policy Context, Talent Acquisition, Development and Motivation, and Talent Retention. There were also several questions related to participants' actions in key strategic Human Capital areas and their individual experiences with the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. The interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes and were conducted in a semi-structured format, which allowed some flexibility for follow-up questions. After conducting the interviews, the researcher sought to make sense of the answers by organizing the interview data into

three separate case studies, and conducting cross-case analyses to identify patterns and themes.

Rationale for Case Study Design

A qualitative case study methodology was used in this study to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the perspective of the Human Resources Leaders, in their own words, about the information collected. This approach provided the researcher with the descriptive thoughts from the views of the Human Resources Leaders about what strategies and approaches have been making the greatest positive difference in their efforts to recruit and retain quality teachers and principals. Case study methodology enabled the researcher to explore participants' perspectives in the context of their respective urban school districts.

Creswell (2007) defines case study research as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of data collection (e.g. observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes.” (p.73). The case study approach allowed the researcher to review multiple sources of data including interviews with the participants, data from the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project about the level of implementation that has occurred with the strategies, and additional evaluation reports from the project. The case study approach also enabled the researcher to incorporate unique characteristics of each participant, such as their academic and professional experience, as well as unique contexts from their individual school districts.

Research Questions

The central research question that guided this study was: From the perspective of Human Resources Leaders in urban school districts, what actions are associated with improved human resources practices that provided better teacher and leader quality in rapidly improving urban schools? Additionally, the study focused on the following questions:

1. From the perspective of Human Resources Leaders in urban school districts, what actions are associated with improved human resources practices that led to better teacher and principal quality in rapidly improving urban schools?
2. What do Human Resources Leaders perceive to be high-impact actions in the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals?
3. How do these actions align with larger goals of their districts and the benchmarks/metrics of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project?

Participants

A purposeful sample of three districts identified from the Human Resources Leaders who are involved with the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project was identified. This sample was selected for a number of reasons. First, this is the only cohort of Human Resources Leaders who are currently participating in a project focused solely on Human Resources improvement. Second, all of the participating districts are urban school districts, and this provides a perspective that informs the improvement in urban school settings. Finally, these ten school districts

are engaged in like-minded reform efforts that provide a level of program buy-in that is required for deep implementation of the project strategies.

Narrowing the participants in this study was critical so that there is an understanding of how leaders who have both the willingness to implement the strategies and have had time to plan and actually accomplish implementation view their improvement efforts. The case study focused on three Human Resources Leaders who have been affecting the reform change in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project as determined by the implementation of the project key strategies, who have been in their districts for two or more years, and who have had experience as leaders beyond their current districts. The researcher predicted that these characteristics enabled each Human Resources Leader to provide valuable insights about leading efforts to recruit and retain quality principals and teachers in urban districts.

District Profiles

Ten urban school districts are participating in the first cohort of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. All of the districts fit the criteria of being considered urban, as defined by the following: Public school districts with more than 25,000 students and at least 51% of students qualify for Free and Reduced Meals by the government standard (Knapp et al, 2009).

Below are the characteristics of the ten districts:

Table I: Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project District Profiles

District	# of Students	% Free/ Reduced Meals	# of Employees (Teachers)
District 1	50,000-60,000	Over 70%	6,000-7,000 (3,000-4,000)

District 2	80,000-90,000	Over 80%	10,000-11,000 (5,000-6,000)
District 3	70,000-80,000	Over 70%	13,000-14,000 (4,000-5,000)
District 4	180,000-190,000	Over 50%	25,000-26,000 (14,000-15,000)
District 5	200,000-210,000	Over 70%	29,000-30,000 (12,000-13,000)
District 6	660,000-670,000	Over 80%	44,000-45,000 (31,000-32,000)
District 7	100,000-110,000	Over 80%	12,000-13,000 (6,000-7,000)
District 8	20,000-30,000	Over 70%	4,000-5,000 (2,000-3,000)
District 9	120,000-130,000	Over 50%	17,000-18,000 (8,000-9,000)
District 10	40,000-50,000	Over 80%	6,000-7,000 (2,000-3,000)

Data collected from District, NCES Common Core of Data, and the Gates Foundation websites in February 2012.

Site Selection

Site selection for the case study analysis was made through a purposeful, criterion sample. Patton (1990) defines purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases, or “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.” (p. 169). Criterion sampling is a specific type of purposeful sampling, which involves selecting participants based on characteristics relevant to the study (Patton, 1990). In this study, all of the districts in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project qualified for review because they met the definition of urban. The actual sites were selected based on three individual characteristics of the Human Resources Leaders. An analysis was accomplished to ascertain each potential participant’s a) number of years in his/her role as Human Resources Leader, b) leadership experience outside of his/her current

district, and c) the level of implementation/engagement in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.

Informed Consent

This study was designed in accordance with the guidelines of the University of Maryland's Human Subjects Review Committee. Prior to engaging in any interviews, Human Resource Leaders from each district were asked to review and sign an informed consent document outlining any potential risks and benefits that may result from participating in this study. Participants were given the opportunity to decline the invitation to participate, or end their involvement in the study at any time without penalty.

This study was also subject to several other layers of review. Upon committee approval of the study, the researcher obtained written consent from the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project Director and the three identified school districts to conduct this research. All of the school districts had previously expressed an interest in engaging in this study.

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality of participants was critical to ensuring that they felt free to answer the questions in the case study openly and honestly. Protecting participants' identities minimizes the risk of negative repercussions from their current employers or colleagues. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for both districts and Human Resources Leaders. Participants had an opportunity to review the final dissertation to ensure that they were comfortable with the information conveyed therein. In the dissertation, identifiable characteristics of each district (such

as specific student enrollments and demographics) were described in ranges to prevent easy identification. Any other details that may compromise participants' identities were not used in the final dissertation.

Data Collection

Data was collected from multiple sources. First, the information was collected for each school district to ensure they met the criteria of being considered urban school districts. Among the eligible districts, data were collected to identify the number of years each Human Resources Leader has served in his/her role in that district. Then, data was collected to determine if the Human Resources Leader had experience outside of their current district. Finally, the researcher reviewed the Year One Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project Evaluation to determine the level of strategy implementation, as determined by the program evaluator. Once that was accomplished, three participants were invited to participate in the one-on-one interview with the researcher. All three Human Resources Leaders who met the criteria agreed to participate in the study.

Interviews

Personal interviews with the three Human Resources Leaders were held to identify their participatory knowledge claims and to ascertain themes across the districts that inform the Human Resources reform work. Sixty to ninety minute interviews were held with each of the three Leaders. Two of the interviews were held in person and one interview was held by telephone conference. The purpose of the interviews was to bring the personal value of each interviewee into the data. By studying the context of the participants, the researcher was able to look for themes

across the districts, make interpretations, and then create an agenda for change and reform.

Each interview was recorded and then transcribed verbatim in a Word document. The questions were based on themes from the framework and the researcher was also open to additional themes (Appendix B). The interviews were open-ended and did not have pre-determined responses. The questions focused on the categories within the Odden (2011) framework identified in *Strategic Management of Human Capital in Education*. The questions fell into the following categories:

Category	Descriptor
Improved Organizational Performance	Student Achievement
Organizational Strategy	Improved Instruction
Role Design	Expectations of What Key Roles Need to Do to Execute the Strategy
Competencies and Motivation	The Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Key Role Holders
Strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talent Acquisition • Talent Development and Motivation • Talent Retention 	The Specific Strategies for How Candidates are Hired, Developed, and Retained Over Time
Context	State Policy, Teacher Associations, External Labor Market, Colleges and Universities
Design and Execution of Human Capital Management at District and School Levels	Strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Selection/Placement • Induction/Mentoring • Professional Development • Performance Management • Compensation

Document Analysis

Several documents required review and analysis in order to determine the purposeful sampling. First, the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement

Project documentation about the purpose, structure, and strategies for the project was reviewed. Additionally, within this documentation is publicly available information about the number of students in each school district, the number of students in each district who qualify for free or reduced price meals (FARMS) and the number of staff, including the specific number of teachers, in each district for the 2012-13 school year. Second, the First Year Program Evaluation was analyzed to determine which districts met the criteria selected for Human Resources Leader experience and implementation. As noted, the Program Evaluation was not a specific requirement of the funding for the project; however, the team developing the Urban Schools Human Resources Project determined that it was critical to the learning about the project to have an outside research specialist accomplish the Program Evaluation. Additionally, the participants were asked to provide responses to determine if they have experience outside of the educational setting. Finally, the researcher's interview notes were analyzed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in a case study methodology was dependent on using the exact words from interviews to support the major themes from the research framework as well as any themes that come to light. In conducting case studies, the researcher collected data by audio recording each of the interviews, transcribing verbatim, and then identifying comments that correspond with the framework. The researcher utilized a constructivist approach, and was open to new themes that came from the interviews.

The researcher utilized Miles & Huberman's (1994) three-step data analysis process. Miles & Huberman identify three, iterative phases of organizing and making meaning of qualitative data, including a) data reduction, b) data display, and c) conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is described as "... the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions." The data reduction phase enables the researcher to identify comments and other data most relevant to the research topic. In this study, the researcher identified interview comments directly related to human resource leaders' descriptions of their efforts to improve teacher and principal quality in their districts. These comments were color-coded with corresponding themes.

Miles & Huberman (1994) describe data display as a progression from data reduction to arrange data into "...an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing..." Data displays may include tables, charts, or other visual depictions of patterns and trends in the qualitative data. For the purposes of this study, the researcher identified themes from the conceptual framework, and listed quotes that corresponded with each theme into a table in Microsoft Excel for each participant. Pertinent themes beyond those from the conceptual framework were added to the table as emerging themes. Data from each of the three cases were compared to identify common themes in Human Resource Leaders' responses.

Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involved considering the meaning of the data as they pertained to the research questions. Verification was utilized as the process of revisiting the data after drawing conclusions to ensure that conclusions were credible. The verification process included identifying and

exploring other possible explanations for findings. Within- and cross-case analyses of the data were suitable for this study since there were three distinct cases (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1995). Cross-case analysis is defined as building “a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1995, p.112). In this study, the researcher identified patterns in the data across cases to draw conclusions about common practices and behaviors they utilized to improve teacher and principal quality in their districts.

Coding Structure

Utilizing a clear coding structure ensured that the themes from both the research framework and emerging themes were identified. Themes were largely based on the Odden (2011) conceptual framework. These specific themes included: Organizational Strategy, Role Design, Competencies and Motivations, Policy Context, Talent Acquisition, Development and Motivation, and Talent Retention. The researcher coded for themes related to participants’ actions in key strategic Human Capital areas such as recruitment, selection/placement, induction/mentoring, professional development, performance management, and compensation. Finally, the researcher coded for elements of the Human Resource Leaders’ individual experiences with the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project and the role of their professional experience outside of their district in their current work.

Limitations

This study was limited by the fact that Human Resources Leaders from only three districts were interviewed. Although their interviews provided valuable insights

about recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers and principals in their respective school systems, their perspectives may not be representative of all urban school districts.

The researcher also spent a limited amount of time interviewing participants and relied on Human Resources Leaders' perceptions of their own work. There were no observations of the Human Resources Leaders in their workspaces, and no assessments of their work by colleagues or other district employees. It is possible that participants overstated their districts' progress to avoid portraying themselves in a negative light. Furthermore, behaviors and practices that the Human Resources Leaders see as being effective may not be perceived as such by the teams of staff responsible for carrying them out.

Finally, the study was based on outcomes from the first two years of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. Although two years is sufficient time for some implementation of strategies from the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, there may be limited insight about the long-term effects of the Human Resources Leaders' work.

Role of Researcher and Trustworthiness

The researcher conducted this study within a project that she is currently involved as a project developer. Although the researcher is personally acquainted with each of the Human Resources Leaders through participation in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, she is not in a supervisory role over any of the participants. She does not serve as the lead on the project nor does she control any of the funding resources for the project. The researcher made it clear to

all of the participants that the purpose of the study was to inform the work of Human Resources improvement and not to pass any level of judgment on the particular district or Human Resources Leader. Although direct quotes from the interview sessions were included in the study, no specific district or leader will be identified.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument for data collection and analysis. Therefore, the researcher's biases and errors may have influenced the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Weber, 1990). The researcher utilized two common practices to ensure that any errors and potential biases are limited in the reporting of the findings: Member Checking and a Peer Reviewer. Member checking is defined as sharing data, analytic categories, and interpretations of data with participants in a study to ensure that participants' intended meanings are accurately conveyed (Creswell, 2007). In this study, interview transcripts with initial themes and notes were shared with participants in order to get their feedback. Once data analysis was completed, findings were shared with participants in the form of a written draft. They had an opportunity to provide comments or revisions before the final dissertation was submitted. The researcher also utilized a Peer Reviewer who is familiar with educational leadership and the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. The reviewer identified any errors or omissions in the interview transcripts, and provided input on themes and findings during the data analysis.

Summary

The researcher used a case study methodology approach to study Human Resources Leaders' perceptions about the strategic actions they implemented to

improve teacher and leader quality in their districts. The study is based on interviews with Human Resources Leaders who have been in their leadership roles for at least a two-year period; have actively engaged in implementing the Project's work to date, and, have had experience in leadership outside of their current school district. Three cases were examined in order to do a cross-case analysis to identify themes and patterns that identify emerging trends for improving teacher and leader quality.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine and identify Human Resources Leaders' perceptions about the strategic actions they implemented which are associated with a strong focus on the improvement of teacher and leader quality. A qualitative case study methodology with a purposeful sampling was used in order to identify the high-impact actions that the Human Resources Leaders implemented. High-impact actions included both district practices and individual Human Resources Leaders' actions.

The researcher employed the Odden (2011) Framework for Strategic Management (improved organizational performance; organizational strategy; role design; competencies and motivation; and specific strategies for talent acquisition, development, and retention) to outline the data and frame the findings. Additionally, local, state, and federal contexts, as well as the background experiences and leadership actions of the Human Resources Leaders, informed the findings and further recommendations.

The researcher reviewed the demographic data and profiles of Human Resources Leaders from the ten districts in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project in order to utilize purposeful sampling to select three Human Resources Leaders who met the study criteria. These criteria consisted of: (a) having been in their leadership roles for at least a two year period, (b) actively engaging in implementing the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project's work to

date, and (c) having had experience in leadership outside of their current school district (including experiences outside of the education sector).

According to Creswell (2007), the case study approach allows the researcher to collect detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources and look for themes across the cases. This approach also enables the researcher to identify the unique characteristics of each participant, including their background and professional experience, which informs the work they do. Finally, the unique contextual elements from the individual school districts were helpful since they informed the perceived and real local, state, and federal boundaries about the work.

In a multiple case study, a standard approach is to provide a detailed description of each case and then provide the cross-case analysis for the themes across the cases (Creswell, 2009, Yin, 1994). For this study, the researcher felt it was important to provide information about each of the Human Resources Leaders involved in the case studies and then understand the themes as they relate to the Odden framework (2011) and then the themes across the cases.

This chapter first provides a profile of all of the school districts in the study and a description of the site selection process. Then, a profile of each of the three Human Resources Leaders is provided with their reflections about how their previous experiences as leaders outside of the educational arena have impacted their current roles. The three Human Resources Leaders also shared thoughts about their individual behaviors they perceive to have had the most positive impact on teacher and leader quality in their school districts. Finally, themes that guided the coding process are provided with supporting quotes and findings.

School District Profiles

Ten school districts are involved in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, and all districts were eligible for consideration for this study. Each of the districts is located in major metropolitan areas with large populations of students from low-income households. More than half of the student populations in all of the school districts are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The smallest district in the project employs over 2,000 teachers, and the largest district employs over 31,000 teachers. Below are the detailed characteristics of the ten districts:

Table 1: Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project District Profiles

District	# of Students	% Free/ Reduced Meals	# of Employees (Teachers)
District 1	50,000-60,000	Over 70%	6,000-7,000 (3,000-4,000)
District 2	80,000-90,000	Over 80%	10,000-11,000 (5,000-6,000)
District 3	70,000-80,000	Over 70%	13,000-14,000 (4,000-5,000)
District 4	180,000-190,000	Over 50%	25,000-26,000 (14,000-15,000)
District 5	200,000-210,000	Over 70%	29,000-30,000 (12,000-13,000)
District 6	660,000-670,000	Over 80%	44,000-45,000 (31,000-32,000)
District 7	100,000-110,000	Over 80%	12,000-13,000 (6,000-7,000)
District 8	20,000-30,000	Over 70%	4,000-5,000 (2,000-3,000)
District 9	120,000-130,000	Over 50%	17,000-18,000 (8,000-9,000)
District 10	40,000-50,000	Over 80%	6,000-7,000 (2,000-3,000)

Data collected from District, NCES Common Core of Data, and the Gates Foundation websites in February 2012.

Site Selection Description

To select participants for individual interviews, the researcher utilized criterion sampling of the ten districts to identify Human Resource Leaders who met the criteria noted for selection into this study. Specifically, prospective participants were expected to (a) have been in their leadership roles for at least a two year period, (b) be actively engaged in implementing the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project's work to date, and (c) have experience in leadership outside of their current school district (including experiences outside of the education sector). Three Human Resources Leaders fully met the stated criteria.

The researcher reviewed each of the Human Resources Leaders' public biographies and Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project records to ensure the Leader met the aforementioned criteria relating to time in their current position and engagement in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. The first criterion was whether the leader has been in his/her role for at least two years, which would include the two years of the project. The second criterion, actively engaging in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, was further defined to include Human Resources Leaders who personally participated in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, and reported gains in assessment metrics.

Assessment metrics for the Project were identified and reported by individual school districts. During the first year of the project, each Human Resources Leader was required to identify assessment metrics to collect and track in their district over time. The assessment metrics were identified by the Urban Schools Human

Resources Improvement Project team as key metrics relate to the levers/actions for improvement. The Leaders collected data about metrics including the following: teacher turnover and recruitment; early contract hiring; vacancy of teacher positions; quality of new hires; satisfaction of principals with new hires; retention of teachers; transfers and involuntary placements; satisfaction of new hires; and effectiveness of teachers as determined by performance evaluations. During the second year of the project, each district reported their progress on these metrics to the staff of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.

Finally, the researcher reviewed the biographies of participants who met the first two qualifications of time in their current role and project engagement to determine if they had experiences outside of their school district and outside of the education sector. Three Human Resources leaders met all three criteria and were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews. The second criterion related to participation in the project was not met by some participants because they may have been new to their role or they may have been unable to attend or participate in parts of the project for different reasons. Table 2 provides a summary of the criterion sampling process.

Table 2: Human Resource Leaders - Criterion Sampling Summary

District/HR Leader	At Least 2 Years in Current Role	Participated for the First Two Years of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project	Active Engagement in Implementing the Project's Work to Date (as determined by program attendance and improvement in assessment metrics)	Experience Outside of their Current School District and Outside of the Education Sector (if all other criteria were met)
District 1 Leader	No	No	Yes	NA
District 2 Leader	Yes	No	No	NA
District 3 Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District 4 Leader	Yes	No	Yes	NA
District 5 Leader	Yes	No	Yes	NA
District 6 Leader	Yes	No	Yes	NA
District 7 Leader	No	No	No	NA
District 8 Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
District 9 Leader	No	No	Yes	NA
District 10 Leader	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Participant Profiles

After reviewing the purposeful sampling criteria, the researcher identified three Human Resources Leaders who met all of the identified criteria. For the purposes of the project, they are identified as Leader A (from District 8), Leader B (from District 10), and Leader C (from District 3). All three of these Human Resources Leaders also had leadership experience outside of the school sector.

Each participant profile below contains brief biographical and professional information about the individual Human Resources Leaders. This profile material was ascertained by reviewing the resumes of each of the Leaders, as well as reviewing the answers they provided during their interviews. Participant profiles include their perceptions of the experiences they had before taking on their current roles as a Human Resources Leader and brief descriptions of the roles they served outside of their educational district role. In the interest of protecting participants' identities, the descriptions of their former jobs have been generalized so that the broad experience is described without details that would make them easily identifiable. Pseudonyms have been assigned to participants and their districts in order to ensure the privacy of each Human Resources Leader participating in the study.

Human Resources Leader A

Human Resources Leader A, from District 8, has served in her current role for three years as the Chief Human Resources Officer. District 8 is an urban school district that serves over 25,000 students, has a 71% Free and Reduced Meal Rate, and

has over 4,500 teachers. Leader A states her career purpose as fully utilizing her talents and expertise in positions of responsibility and influence by practicing ethical leadership. Her educational background includes a liberal arts undergraduate degree and master's degree in the area of industrial and labor relations. She has been working in a variety of roles for over 35 years. Her early career roles were focused in the area of labor relations in a large, highly unionized business field. She had several roles in this field and worked her way up to a supervisory position. For a period of over 20 years, she served in a variety of roles in her current school district, including roles related to labor relations; however, all of her roles were in areas that did not directly focus on curriculum or instruction.

When asked how her previous experience as a leader outside of public education helped her to implement her work in the role of Human Resources Leader in an urban school district, she said, “a perspective from outside and being willing to question the status quo” was most important. She further reflected that coming from outside of education provides “a profit motive, and it forces efficiencies.” Leader A used business language such as, “It forces you to be focused on what the product is” and, “It forces you to focus on customer service.” She commented, “You’re constantly driven to work efficiently because your competitors make you do that.” Further, she spoke about the importance of understanding the context of organizational culture in her work, stating, “... having an understanding of the context that exists in the private sector and the context that exists in the public sector is helpful to me.” She identified not having a background in education as an area of strength for her because she does not have preconceived ideas about how things have

been run in Human Resources over a long period of time as a teacher and/or principal might. She said, “It’s allowed me to bring something to the organization that might not naturally occur in organizations that tend to have educators. We promote from within a lot so that perspective has helped me to be helpful in some ways.”

Human Resources Leader B

Human Resources Leader B has served in her current role for three years as the Chief Human Resources Officer in a medium-sized urban school district in the Midwest. District 10 serves over 40,000 students, has an 83% Free and Reduced Meal rate, and has almost 6,200 teachers. In her executive profile, Leader B indicates that she has demonstrated leadership experience in both corporate and non-profit environments; she is an exceptional communicator with strong negotiation and problem-solving skills; and she has experience in leading teams and establishing collaborative partnerships both internally and externally. Her educational background includes an undergraduate degree in international business and a master’s degree in organizational development and project management. She has worked in a variety of roles in the last fifteen years including the areas of sales, financial management, and nonprofit leadership. She has worked in other roles in her current school district, including leading the development of the district’s work related to teacher and leader effectiveness. All of her previous work experience was in roles that did not directly focus on curriculum or instruction.

When asked how her previous experience as a leader outside of public education influenced her current work, she focused on the new perspective she can bring to her job. She indicated: “I think that, not to sound clique-ish, but really the

new perspective, sometimes you question things because you don't know any better, and that the questioning usually drives somebody to say, 'I don't know why we do that but it's the way we've always done it.'" She also utilized business language when she reflected on being "outcome-based rather than just being married to the process or the way that things worked." She also spoke about the way that education leaders can learn from business leaders, stating, "There are many lessons to be learned from other entities outside of education that really have mastered the way that they focus on talent."

Human Resources Leader C

Human Resources Leader C has served in her current role as Chief Human Resources Officer for over 6 years. District 3 is the largest of the three districts selected with almost 80,000 students. This district has a Free and Reduced Meal rate of just over 72% and employs over 13,000 teachers. In her executive profile, Leader C identifies that she is a strategic leader with success in driving transformational change; she is a strong systems thinker; and she is a creative problem solver who works with stakeholders for results. Her educational background includes an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts field and a degree in the legal field. Before her current position, she worked in a variety of roles in the legal field. All of her previous work experiences were in areas that did not focus on the areas of curriculum or instruction.

When responding to the question about how her previous experience as a leader outside of public education has helped her to implement her work in the role of Human Resources Leader in an urban school district, she indicated that the "freshness

of perspective” made the biggest difference. She indicated that having worked in a high-performing organization in the private sector provided her with a set of strategies to use to focus on metrics. She indicated: “So, I think that perspective, knowledge or experience of what’s happening in other industries as well as the lack of investment in the current structure gives me a certain permission to challenge structures or systems that have been in place a long time.”

She also reflected that her background in negotiations has informed her work as a Human Resources Leader. She utilizes interest-based bargaining and indicated that “I think I’ve said that those negotiation skills are really important, and just the belief that it’s important for us to be continuing to drive forward our interests even when there’s a lot of opposition or controversy.” She frequently utilized business terms such as sustainability, interest-based bargaining, and negotiation skills.

In summary, across the three Human Resources Leaders selected for this study, the researcher identified several commonalities in participants’ reflections about their experiences. All three of the leaders had background experiences in the areas of negotiations and problem solving. These leaders demonstrated a belief in interest-based bargaining and figuring out how to identify solutions that would get positive results. They were willing to be open to new ideas and did not take positions about processes before they understood the context behind their implementation. They also spoke about how they did not have pre-conceived ideas about how certain work should be done, so they were open to new systems, structures, and processes. Additionally, they said that their experience using negotiation skills was important.

Because none of them had ever served as a classroom teacher or a principal, it was not surprising that they had limited understanding of curriculum and instruction.

Findings

The themes that were identified for coding were formulated around the major themes in the Odden (2011) framework. In this framework, Odden identifies five major themes that are evident in organizations that have high-performing human resources departments. First, he indicates that understanding the goals of the district is essential in ensuring that all of the work of human resources is directly aligned to the core goal of the organization. Second, once the goal is clearly understood, the organization must have a clear strategy for reaching that goal. Odden wrote about having an instructional strategy, such as a focus in improving reading, to ensure that all actions in the district are aligned to improve organizational performance. Third, the roles in the district would be directly designed to address areas that the district is trying to improve upon. Fourth, the competencies and motivations for each of the major roles would include the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the key role holders so that the skills of new hires match the roles. Fifth, there would be specific strategies for how candidates are hired, developed, and retained over time. In addition to these five major themes, the design and execution of the strategies for improvement would relate directly to the key work of Human Capital Management (recruitment, selection/placement, induction, professional development, performance management, and compensation). Finally, Odden (2011) identified that the context of

the district matters and districts must pay attention to external influences such as state policy, teacher associations, external labor markets, and colleges/universities.

In each of these major thematic areas, there was evidence from the interviews that the Human Resources Leaders in this study utilized the principles from Odden's (2011) framework in their roles. They did not specifically reference the Odden framework as one they were utilizing; instead they spoke to the different elements that Odden identifies. Evidence for each thematic area is presented, and then areas of themes across the three case studies are highlighted.

Theme 1: A Clear Statement of Improved Organizational Performance

All three Human Resources Leaders identified a clear statement of Improved Organizational Performance that was aligned with their school districts' goals to increase student achievement. Unlike in the past when Human Resources was focused on transactional work that was often compliance-oriented and not connected to district student achievement goals, these three Human Resources Leaders were aligned with the strategic work of the district. The three Leaders participate on their Superintendents' executive leadership teams and their work is fully integrated into the districts' improvement efforts. They noted that increasing student achievement is their major goal. Whereas this may appear simplistic in nature because all school districts should be focused on improving student achievement, these Human Resources Leaders have incorporated this organizational goal into their core thinking and language. They felt that student achievement was an important goal for all schools, but particularly relevant in urban schools. They indicated that student achievement must increase and they must close the achievement gap in their own

districts. Specifically, Leader A and Leader C shared their reflections about the urban context, and expressed concerns that the district has not been meeting the learning needs of all students.

Leader A indicated that “We have to accelerate the achievement of our students” and at the same time “... we’ve got to find those strategies that will support and accelerate the growth of our students who have been historically under-served and not hold back our other students.” She continued discussing the learning needs of students with a range of backgrounds, saying: “It really is something that we have to put as a foundational outcome because treading water for us is not okay... We have really come to a place where we recognized that we had an achievement gap that was both persistent and unacceptable.” She indicated that the district where she works has some achievement gains for white and Asian students, but they have not seen the same level of results for students of color. In explaining the history of her school district, she commented, “We care about the achievement of all kids, but we really have to address the historically under-served that drives the gap.” She strongly stated a need to meet this goal when she said: “The racial achievement gap is persistent and completely unacceptable.”

For Leader A, there was an emphasis on also increasing student achievement in order to become a district that stays in business. Because of the decreasing size of the student population in her district, she emphasized that the goal was both important to students and also important for the district to stay in business. She said, “Every person in the organization understands that our goals are to advance the academic achievement of all of our schools, but to eliminate racial disparities and to become a

district of first choice.” In reflecting on the climate of public education and urban schooling in particular, she commented, “We’ve just really recognized, as everybody has, that our climate has changed. We have competition.” In this comment, she was referencing both private and charter schools. As part of the context of being an urban school district that must improve student achievement, she indicated that previously, “You could expect you were the only game in town, and that state and federal money and all of that was going to flow to you. We find now that those assumptions – financially and otherwise – can no longer be the framework that we work in.” The context of being in a persistently under-performing school district weighed heavily in all of her comments.

Leader C identified the same organizational goal of student achievement for her district. She said,

“There’s a certain belief set that is really important as well. If we think about our goal, that every child is successful and the tremendous challenges we have around closing achievement gaps, the belief set that every child is capable of learning at a high level, I think it’s just a fundamental place to start.”

Finally, when asked about her district’s goals, Leader C also mentioned the importance of focusing on student achievement, and referenced her ongoing focus on improving test scores and ensuring students are college and career ready.

In addition to supporting student achievement, all of the participants discussed being results-driven in their work, and developing collaborative teams to achieve their goals. During the interviews, all three leaders were asked the following question: What are the two to three behaviors that you have personally demonstrated that have

had the most impact in your school district? Their business backgrounds supported a notion that there is a fiscal responsibility to be more efficient and effective and they demonstrate certain behaviors that were both focused on getting results and utilizing others effectively in the process. They also spoke about creative problem solving and finding ways to address issues in new ways.

The most prevalent behavior that all of them described was their attention to building teams and being collaborative across teams in their roles as Human Resources Leaders. Even though all of them had background experiences in negotiations and labor relations, their focus on interest-based strategies rather than position-based strategies came out in their focus on teams and collaboration.

Leader A indicated that she demonstrated behaviors around showing her strong belief in teams that learn together; building a culture of improvement in her team and the district; and a strong belief that all students can learn at high levels.

Leader A:

“I believe strongly in teams. I can’t do this work, one person can’t and so our success is completely dependent on having a team that believes in mission, that comes ready to work hard every day and that’s the only way. I have invested a lot of time and energy since moving into the Chief Human Resources Officer role to be very attentive to the power of teams.”

Leader B also demonstrated this strong belief:

“I think that probably, from my end, a collaboration across departments and across organizational lines.”

“I think I pride myself in the fact that I have to be constantly involved and understand the pulse of what’s going on at schools because that has allowed me to not just be reactive but to plan for the needs of buildings and the needs of schools.”

Leader C identified two behaviors around problem solving and collaboration:

“I would say I have two. I would say the first is creative problem solving.

Given some of the challenges that we face as a district and as an HR department, I think the ability to come up with creative solutions to long-standing problems is probably the most important skill that I use.”

“I think that other thing has been the ability to drive collaborations across groups.”

All three of the Human Resources Leaders indicated that being a leader of a performance-based culture and working with their team and across teams were the most prevalent behaviors that they demonstrated.

Theme 2: A Clear Organizational Strategy

When asked about the major Organizational Strategy for their districts, all three of the Human Resources Leaders focused directly on the need to hire effective teachers to maximize student learning. This strategy is a formal, identified strategy of improvement in the districts. Even though they mentioned the importance of having great principals in their responses, they all focused on strategies to get effective teachers into their districts. The organizational strategy was less around the improvement of instruction when the teachers have already been hired; instead, the

strategy was on getting effective teachers hired on the front end. When asked about this key organizational strategy, Leader A commented:

“I would say that empowering effective teachers’ work, which has three goals that are aligned pretty nicely. I think together they provide a pretty tightly knit framework for a lot of Human Capital work, and that was to increase the number of effective teachers in the district.”

She was specifically referencing work around the three goals of getting great teachers into the school district. She added: “Secondly, how do you get your most effective teachers to the children that need them the most, which you can see connects with the district goals.” The way to match effective teachers to the highest needs students has been identified in the literature as an important strategy in urban school districts (Frank and Gordon, 2013).

Leaders B and C also noted the importance of hiring effective teachers in their districts’ organizational strategies. Leader B began her answer very directly by indicating, “Our major strategy is ensuring that there is an effective teacher, an effective leader in every classroom.” She indicated that they have a strong framework for teacher and leader effectiveness, and they have continued to build on their framework “because we believe that identifying what makes great teachers, great leaders will help us inform the decisions we’re making about hiring the best talent into the district.”

Leader C identified four instructional strategies that they have been pursuing in their school district. Leader C said, “The first is around excellent educators, and this is work around really attracting great teachers and leaders to our district.” The

other three strategies she identified included the Common Core instructional focus, support for English-Language Learner students, and differentiated support to schools, which is a way of keeping decision-making at the school level. She tied the need to understand instructional improvement and site-based decision-making with the importance of selecting effective teachers, and leaders, who can implement this work.

Themes 3 and 4: Designing Roles and Competencies to Execute the Strategy

The third and fourth major themes in the Odden framework (2011) focus on districts being clear about the expectations of what key roles (teachers and principals) need to do to execute the strategy as well as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of these key role holders. Odden (2011) separated out the Role Design work from identifying the concurrent Competencies and Motivations for the Roles, but all three of the Human Resources Leaders interviewed felt that those two themes were intertwined to a degree that they could not respond to them as separate themes. When asked why they connected the two ideas of roles and competencies, they indicated that they identified competencies at the same time as designing roles.

All three of the Human Resources Leaders indicated that having teachers simply know their course content is not enough; teachers and leaders in urban settings must possess additional unique characteristics. This expectation is reflected in the No Child Left Behind legislation and other research indicating that being a Highly Qualified Teacher is more of a basic requirement, rather than an indicator of effectiveness (Rothman and Barth, 2009). All three of the Human Resources Leaders indicated that they spent considerable amounts of time leading the work in their districts around writing clear definitions of what an effective teacher is and does. At

the time of their interviews, all three of the Leaders were furthering this work by defining what an effective principal does.

Leader A made several statements that provided insight into her definition of effective teachers:

“When we think about what it would look like to accelerate achievement and close the racial achievement gap, it requires teachers who both know their content well and can deliver it as well as teachers who believe in the possibility of all students.”

“We challenged ourselves to write a concise definition of an effective teacher so that we knew what we were looking for.”

“It’s about content, but it’s also about sort of the belief in the potential of all children, as well as the engagement that will address what it takes really in urban settings to really have that connection with students that will drive them to fulfill their potential.”

Leader B made similar statements, saying:

“We look for a core belief that all children can learn, and that they don’t just recite that belief but they actually do in their core believe in the mission of the district to provide every student with a high-quality education in a no-excuses type of attitude, and we also want them to have the predisposition to use their knowledge and skills to engage students.”

“Our teacher and leader effectiveness framework is the definition of what [an] effective teacher looks like in the classroom.” She described the elements of

the teacher and leader effectiveness framework as focusing in the understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

“The way we have moved towards understanding effective instruction and what an effective teacher, principal, and employee [is] has really been a game changer for us because I think at the core of that search for what makes an effective teacher and effective principal is the entire mission of any Human Capital department. “

Leader C:

“It’s around giving them [teachers and principals] frameworks that define what excellence looks like in teaching.”

Leader A and Leader B spoke specifically about frameworks and definitions. At the time of the interviews, they had developed the initial frameworks for teachers and were beginning to utilize them within their evaluation structure, and this early implementation stage was a key part of their workload. They were beginning to develop the frameworks for principals. Leader C, who has been in her role for six years and has been with the same superintendent through many of those years, spoke less about frameworks and definitions. Her district has been implementing the teacher framework for a longer period of time and they have completed the development of the principal framework. Instead, she focused on additional work that effective teachers and principals have to do around developing and implementing the Common Core curriculum, supporting the learning needs of English Language-learners, and providing differentiated supports to schools. These are integrated focus

areas in the district where she is deepening the connections between the work of Human Resources and instructional improvements.

Theme 5: Strategies for Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, and Talent Retention

The Human Resource Leaders in this study described similar understandings of strategies for talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention; however, the actual strategies in each of the districts were very different. All three of the Human Resources Leaders spoke to methods they use to ensure certification (Highly Qualified Teachers); however they considered these to be minimal requirements for their new hires. Instead, they focused on how to attract, select, develop, and retain teachers whose backgrounds and skill sets matched the needs of their districts. Once again, they indicated that their focus is now moving to hiring effective principals, but they all acknowledged that they focused on teachers first.

Talent Acquisition: Recruiting and Selection

All three of the Human Resources Leaders focused on the best way to screen candidates who fit the needs of their district. Leaders A and B both spoke about “rebranding” the district. For Leader A, this rebranding was about getting out the message that their district is actually hiring instead of downsizing as was done in the past. Leader B described her district being more specific about skills and training they are seeking in applicants, and more targeted in their recruitment efforts.

Leader A indicated that recruiting and then screening in her district is particularly challenging because state law mandates additional screening for potential employees. Specifically, she commented, “Every applicant must get placed on an

eligibility list” based on their scores on an assessment designed to screen for an aptitude for working with urban populations. She indicated that “We score against three essay questions... the first is around a desire to work in high-need schools, the second is ensuring high academic achievement for all students, and the third is overcoming challenges and facing multiple responsibilities.” The district also seeks candidates who demonstrate persistence and high expectations for students. Leader A indicated that her district is working to “understand our current workforce” by having teachers who are getting better student learning results take surveys so that the district can learn from them and then recruit more teachers like them.

Leader B was not able to identify specific actions they have implemented at this point to acquire the best talent when she noted, “I don’t think that we’ve implemented necessarily anything effective. We’re just now beginning to quantify the quality of our talent pool. So, we’re behind on this work.”

Leader C, who spoke in depth about talent acquisition strategies in her district, indicated that because she has been in her role for over six years, they have had more time to develop and implement new strategies. She focused on “really aggressively working with some of our main providers of teacher talent and principal talent to seek greater alignment between what we’re seeking as a district and the way in which they’re developing teachers and leaders.”

Overall, it was clear that the Human Resource Leaders are all becoming more data-driven in their approach to talent acquisition. Leaders A and C both spoke about specific talent acquisition strategies in their districts. All of the participants discussed

ways to make more informed decisions about what talent they acquire based on current student and teacher outcomes.

Talent Development through Induction/Mentoring, Performance Management, and Professional Development

The role of Induction and Mentoring was identified as a key strategy to ensure that teachers have the necessary supports to be successful. All three of the Human Resources Leaders shared concerns about the teacher turnover of first and second year teachers in their districts. All three of the school districts partner with non-profit organizations that provide new teachers to urban school districts and these teachers are only required to stay for two years. Because of this limited requirement, there is additional turnover in these districts. Additionally, Leader C indicated they are trying to retain their strongest teachers who were leaving to teach in neighboring suburban school districts that were less challenging. Finally, they were also increasingly making difficult decisions to release under-performing teachers earlier.

Performance Management was the major strategy that the three Human Resources Leaders identified. They indicated that if they cast a wide net during the recruitment and selection process, then it was through the Performance Management process that they could move out ineffective teachers and improve others.

Leader A:

“Using multiple measures of teacher performance (value-added, observation, students’ surveys) to know which kind of teacher is getting the best student learning and then hiring more teachers like that.”

“We are reaching out to those Distinguished Teachers to understand: What was your pathway? Where did you go to school? Were you a good student? Were you not? Did you have community experiences before you developed teaching? We actually feel like understanding current Distinguished Teachers really is a key piece that we need to be all about.”

Leader B:

“We move a step forward with not only creating that framework – it’s the basis of our evaluation system – it’s helping us guide instruction, it’s helping us guide the decision-making around talent selection in management.”

Leader C:

“I think as we’ve implemented our teacher evaluation structures, we’ve really seen those structures as important tools of professional growth and development.”

The Human Resources Leaders all spoke about new ways to think about the professional development of teachers. The link between professional learning and student achievement seems natural; if districts improve the skills of teachers and principals, student achievement will ultimately improve. In fact, the logic seems so straightforward that districts spend significant resources –anywhere from 2-5% of their total budgets – on professional development (Gullanhussen, 2013). Yet, the research is far from conclusive. Of the 1,300 studies on the impact of teacher professional development on K-12 student outcomes, only nine provided “evidence [of impact] without reservations” by the federal What Works Clearinghouse’s standards. These studies show that, under very specific conditions, teacher

professional development has the potential to boost student achievement by approximately 21 percentile points. (Yoon, et al, 2007),

Leader A did not mention anything about the training of teachers for professional development. Instead, she spoke about Career Lattice Roles, Instructional Leader Roles, and developing internal pipelines. She spoke about the reform partners they have, such as the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, to think about professional development in new ways.

Leader B also referenced developing internal pipelines and building school level leadership positions such as their Staff Development Teachers, to build the capacity of teachers. She also mentioned reform partners active in her district. These reform partners, mostly non-profit organizations, provide a pipeline of non-traditional teachers and principals to urban schools districts. Also, these reform partners provide opportunities for urban school districts to become a learning cohort about reform initiatives.

Talent Retention through Compensation

One of the strategies that the three Human Resources Leaders identified as essential to retaining talent in their district was compensating teachers who have the highest performance.

Leader A discussed the importance of recognizing effective teachers to retain them, saying,

There is a way to elevate and advance your career without leaving your classroom because we want our most effective teachers in front of our children and we don't want them to feel like the only way to

advance their careers is to leave their professional and move out of those classrooms.

She noted that high-performing teachers receive a special designation called “Distinguished Teachers” and others have opportunities to take on other leadership roles:

We believe developing quite a lot of roles that have additional compensations as well as additional responsibilities and exposure, are specifically designed to say something positive to some of our most effective teachers.

Leader B identified compensation as a major issue in her state. She indicated that they have not been able to move the discussion about basic compensation at the state or local level, so the only way to address this issue has been around additional pay for additional responsibilities:

So we started the process by creating ‘teacher leader’ positions. So, those are positions that teachers were able to apply for if they could, obviously, be effective teachers and they could prove that they had the ability to share knowledge with others.

Leader C spoke most extensively about compensation because her district had been implementing a major reform effort in this area for over ten years. She stated, “We’ve had in place for about ten years now a performance based compensation system for teachers that ties compensation more directly with the results that teachers achieve with students.” Despite her district’s progress in this area, she noted that there are still areas for improvement in adequately compensating effective teachers: “So, I

think the system has started to move in the direction of tying compensation more directly with performance. There are still some areas of strength and some areas of growth.”

Summary of Findings

The researcher identified many consistent themes across these three case studies. The consistent themes were aligned with Odden’s framework (2011) in a number of ways. First, in each district, there was a clear organizational goal about needing to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap. Second, the strategy was clearly focused on getting effective teachers into the districts’ classroom. There was no or limited discussion about instructional improvements such as focusing on reading, mathematics, or other skill development. The clear strategy was having the right teacher, and eventually the right leader. Additionally, there was a clear theme across the districts that the role of the teacher and principal in urban school districts needed to be defined and supported differently than in the past.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings associated with this study related to examining and identifying Human Resources Leaders’ perceptions about the strategic actions they implemented which are associated with a strong focus on the improvement of teacher and leader quality. The Odden Framework (2011) was utilized for the framing of themes related to how urban school districts improve their Human Capital Management work. The chapter began with a description of how three Human Resources Leaders were selected for case studies through the use of purposeful sampling. Utilizing the criteria of the purposeful sampling, the three

Leaders met all stated criteria. After that, a profile was provided along with the Leaders' reflections about how their previous experiences as leaders outside of the educational arena have impacted their current learning. Additionally, they provided thoughts about the behaviors they have personally demonstrated that have had the most impact on their work. Finally, the themes from the coding were provided with quotes of support, and then themes across the three case studies were identified. The themes across the three case studies were consistent with the themes in the Odden Framework. A number of recommendations for practice and further research were drawn from these findings and are presented in Chapter 5. The following chapter also presents conclusions reached because of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

This qualitative study describes the perceptions of three Human Resources Leaders from urban school districts related to strategic actions they have implemented to improve teacher and leader quality in their school districts. These three Leaders serve in a leadership role to change previous Human Resources practices that may have been more compliance and transactional in nature to fully integrated, strategic practices aligned with their districts' goals to increase student achievement. Considering the roles of principals and teachers in student achievement gains (Leithwood, et al., 2004), improving the actions taken to ensure the most effective teachers and principals are recruited for and retained in urban school districts is of critical importance. In this case study, the researcher used the Odden Framework for Strategic Management of Human Capital (2011) to provide a construct for understanding the perspectives of these Human Resources Leaders. This chapter is organized into the following sections: purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, summary of findings, implications for policy and practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of a subset of the Human Resources Leaders engaged in a cohort-based reform effort called the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project about the strategic, high impact actions they have implemented related to the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals in their districts. Three Human Resources Leaders in

the Project met the identified criteria, and they were interviewed to determine what the researcher could learn about the themes across the cases. The actions these Human Resources Leaders highlighted were studied using the components of the Odden Human Capital Management Framework (2011) focused on identifying the following: the district goals and the driving organizational strategy; the competencies that teachers and principals need to produce student achievement results in these urban school districts; and the strategies utilized to recruit, select, and retain teachers and principals in the context of the urban setting. The professional profiles of these three Human Resources Leaders were reviewed to identify similarities of experiences as well as their perceptions of the impact of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project.

Research Questions

Students in urban school districts often have significantly lower standardized test scores and higher drop-out rates than students in suburban and rural schools (NAEP, 2012), and there are significant issues with recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers in these urban school districts (CPRE, 2009). There are also great challenges with retaining high quality principals in these urban school districts (Burhauser et al., 2012). Often, our students with the greatest needs are taught and lead by the least effective teachers and principals (Schwartz et al., 2010). Human Resources departments in urban school settings are critically important to the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and principals, and these departments must utilize innovative strategies to do this human capital work (Milankowski & Kimball, 2010; Odden, 2011; Stanton & Matsko, 2010). The

research indicates that traditional strategies have not improved teacher and principal quality in urban school districts, and Human Resources systems must be fundamentally reformed in order to improve these efforts (Odden, 2011). Because there is a need for more information about the practices of urban Human Resources Leaders, this researcher identified the following questions:

Research Question 1:

From the perspective of Human Resources Leaders in urban school districts, what actions are associated with improved human resources practices that led to better teacher and principal quality in rapidly improving urban schools?

Research Question 2:

What do Human Resources Leaders perceive to be high-impact actions in the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals?

Research Question 3:

How do these actions align with larger goals of their districts and the benchmarks/metrics of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project?

Methodology

This qualitative case study focused on learning from a set of Human Resources Leaders who are engaged in a three-year long cohort learning experience called the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling to identify and interview a set of Human Resources Leaders who are affecting positive change in their urban school districts (Creswell, 2007). The purposeful sampling of the ten districts engaged in the Project was utilized to identify the subset of participants who met a specified set of criteria. Then,

the researcher interviewed each of the selected Human Resources Leaders, coded their responses using the construct of the Odden framework (2011), and then identified themes about the high impact actions.

A subset of Human Resources Leaders was identified for case study participation because they have been in their roles for at least two years and have been actively engaged in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project since its inception. Additionally, these Leaders met a third criterion of having experience in a leadership role outside of school district work. The researcher was interested in studying the ways that Leaders with experience outside of the educational field took action with a rigorous process. (Boudreau & Ramsted (2007).

Three out of the ten Human Resources Leaders engaged in the project met the study criteria, and interviews were held with these three Leaders. Human Resources Leader A has served in her current role for three years, and her background includes degrees in liberal arts and labor relations; she has served in leadership roles in both business and school settings. Human Resources Leader B has also served in her role for three years and her degrees are in the areas of business and her work experiences have been in the business and non-profit fields. Finally, Human Resources Leader C has degrees in both the liberal arts and legal field. Her experiences were in the legal field before she came to the urban school role. None of the three Human Resources Leaders had experience as teachers or principals in their past roles.

In addition to the case study interviews and the review of the Leaders' professional profiles, the researcher reviewed the data from the first and second year program evaluations of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project

(Kerr, 2013) conducted by an outside program evaluator. These data included information about the collection of project metrics and participant satisfaction with the program to date. This information was utilized for the purposeful sampling.

Discussion of Findings

This study focused on the changing role of Human Resources in urban school, and the three Human Resources Leaders studied see themselves as introducing new and innovative management strategies to ensure alignment with district goals to close the achievement gap for students. The evolution of the changes in Human Resources is well-integrated into the districts' work. To guide the findings and themes across the three cases studied, the researcher utilized the Odden Framework for Strategic Management of Human Capital (2011). The findings from this study fall into four separate categories that align closely with the framework. First, the interviewees were clear about an organizational goal and primary strategy for the district's work. Second, they were all doing substantial work to redefine the key roles of teachers and were beginning work on the role of the urban principal. Third, they had specific strategies for recruitment, development, and retention; however, these strategies varied across the districts. Fourth, the context of the urban setting had an impact on the work they have been able to accomplish. Finally, there was a fifth set of findings around the background experiences of these three Human Resources Leaders and insights gained from their participation in the Urban School Human Resources Improvement Project. Specifically, leaders who did not have a background in curriculum and instruction found the work of the Project helpful in defining their work and providing supports.

Clarity of Organizational Goals and Primary Strategy

Finding #1: Having a clear organizational goal for improved student achievement drives the work of the district. The researcher found that all three of the Human Resources Leaders identified improving student achievement as the organizational goal for the district and that everything they work on must relate directly to this goal. The three Leaders were unequivocal about this. Even though many districts espouse the importance of increasing student achievement, the critical understanding by these three Human Resources Leaders is that the work of their departments is critical to achieve this mission. They believe their metrics should demonstrate their co-ownership of student achievement. According to the Odden (2011) framework, it is essential to have clarity on the goals of the district, and these goals should be directly aligned with the purpose of the organization. According to the latest research, approximately 30% of the K-12 population in the United States, representing 15 million students, attends schools in urban school districts across the country, and the average math and reading scores for these urban school districts falls well below those of schools not considered to be urban (NAEP, 2013). In the 2013 results, only three urban school districts scored higher than other large school districts in math and reading scores, and nine urban school districts scored lower than other large districts in both subjects (NAEP, 2013). These disparities in math and reading scores have led Human Resource Leaders to place special emphasis on student achievement in urban districts.

Finding #2: Recruiting and selecting high quality teachers whose skill sets match needs in urban school settings is the key strategy for improvement. All three of the

Human Resources Leaders identified getting high quality teachers in their districts as the primary strategy for improvement. The Odden framework (2011) identifies improved instruction as a potential key descriptor of the most important organizational strategy; however, these Human Resources Leaders indicated that the first step had to be recruiting and hiring potentially strong teachers and then there can be a focus on instructional improvement. Leithwood and associates (2004) indicated that the teacher accounts for thirty three percent of student achievement gains. Considering research indicating that low income and minority students are the least likely to be exposed to high quality teachers (CPRE, 2009), recruiting and selecting high quality teachers is a key strategy for improving outcomes in urban districts. Researchers have also identified instructional improvement as essential (Darling-Hammond, 2000 & Saphier, et al, 2008). Although these Human Resources Leaders indicated that they were working on developing rubrics of performance, they indicated in their interviews that the most important first step was selecting high quality candidates first.

Role Design for the Teacher and Principal in Urban Districts

Finding #3: Redesigning the role of teachers and principals to reflect the qualities and motivations that are needed for success in urban school districts is an essential first step. Because the Human Resources Leaders in this study felt that first order business was selecting high quality teachers, they have taken actions to redefine the role of an effective teacher in the urban setting. All three Human Resources Leaders were clear in their beliefs that urban school settings required teachers and principals with a range of skills far beyond the basic definition of the Highly Qualified Teacher

as defined in the *No Child Left Behind* Legislation. In their interviews, they agreed with the research that indicates basic teacher certification in a subject area has a limited causal relationship with student achievement gains (Kane, et al., 2008). Kozol (2007) and Elmore (2003) identified differences in the work that is needed in urban school settings from other school settings. The New Teacher Project (TNTP, 2012) has developed a comprehensive definition of the competencies and motivations of urban school teachers, and there is compelling current research indicating that novice teachers in high poverty schools are more successful and have higher rates of retention when they show perseverance and passion for long term goals, which is called “grit” in the latest research (Yettick, 2014). This is aligned with the research linking the importance of teachers who build persistence in their students (Chenoweth, 2007). All three of the Human Resources Leaders agreed that these types of characteristics are critical, and they have all lead the work of redefining the role of the teacher to include these competencies and motivations as desirable traits for new hires. Specifically, competencies around motivating and working with diverse sets of students are included in their redefined teacher roles.

Varied Strategies for Improving Recruitment and Retention

Finding #4: Implementing numerous creative strategies for improving the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers is important. Odden (2011) indicated that Human Resources Departments need to change their work dramatically because what they have done in the past was not yielding results. Heneman and Milanowski (2007) specified that there are strategies around recruitment, selection/placement, induction/mentoring, professional development, performance

management, and compensation to ensure strategic work in Human Resources departments. The three Leaders interviewed for this study have been funded by numerous reform organizations to develop promising practices and accomplish action research because they are considered to be leading in their field. All three of these Leaders indicated that through the training and resources they received in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, they have deepened their understanding of strategies to recruit and retain the most effective teachers in their districts. They were at different stages of implementing their recruitment and retention plans, and often the context of their districts drove many of the decisions they made related to requirements of the states they work in or the availability of resources to implement strategies. They all noted that reform-minded non-profit organizations who served as partners were key players in helping them implement new ideas and strategies.

Finding #5: Defining the role of the principal in urban schools is important and must be matched to the schools they lead. The recruitment and retention of high quality principals is in the beginning phases across the three districts. As indicated in the research, the role of the principal has changed from being defined as a manager to a broader definition of instructional leadership and then leader of human capital management (Kimball, 2011; Knapp et al., 2010; Murphy, 2009; Odden, 2011; Platt et al., 2008; Portin et al., 2009; Stein & Curtis, 2010). All three of the Human Resources Leaders spoke most about the role of the teacher and the work they were doing to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Then, they indicated that they are beginning to focus more fully on the work around finding, developing, and

retaining high quality principals. They all spoke about “transformational leaders” by indicating they need collaborative and self-aware leaders who have, according to Leader B, “the attitudes that they need to have are to be cross-boundary leaders. To really think of themselves as not only the person in charge, but more importantly the person that supports everyone in the building.” Leader C agreed when she summarized this work by saying, “I think that their ability to lead change, their ability to drive a coherent strategy, in which they can employ people, time, and money against goals.” Participants in this study also indicated that they are in the beginning stages of identifying ways to assess the effectiveness of principals and this is in concert with researchers who have linked school leadership to student performance (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Rice, 2010).

Context Matters

Finding #6: Federal, state, and local policies related to human resources work and the role of unions was often considered a roadblock to improvement. The researcher found that all three of the Human Resources Leaders provide extensive examples of how federal, state and local policies served as roadblocks to implementing innovative Human Resources practices. Leader C said it clearly when she stated:

I am consistently struck by the level of politicization of the environment that we operate in. When you think about the need for dramatic change within the school environment, there are so many external forces that are impacting how the work must move forward. Certainly, there are state laws and collective bargaining provisions that set parameters around some of the work and that can be some of the

ones that we've seen are most impactful to our work – around the restrictions on the ability to hire great teachers into the system, the restrictions and ability to evaluate, to provide opportunities for growth of teachers, but also to remove teachers who may not be performing at a high level. Those are all restrictions that are often built into State policy and/or collective bargaining agreements in a way that it can be very difficult to maneuver around.

She further spoke about the role of the board of education to break down barriers and the ways that colleges and universities provide context by providing the teacher supply support that is necessary. Finally, she reflected on the important role that reform groups, such as the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, served as thought-partners to work around the contextual issues that blocked improvement.

Leader A concurred with these sentiments and reflected on state requirements that constrict the freedom to evaluate effectively and teachers unions that blocked reform work. In particular, she said that in her state there was a policy that required districts to lay-off the newest teachers when downsizing, despite the fact that these teachers might be the most effective in working with urban students. She indicated that the traditional teacher preparation programs offered by many local colleges and universities often lacked the rigor to prepare graduates to work in urban school setting like her district.

Finally, Leader B spoke about the teacher shortage in her state. Because teachers, particularly those in the larger urban centers, are paid less than workers in

other fields, the entire state is facing a shortage. The contextual issue around compensation weighed heavily on her mind. Like her colleagues, Leader B spoke about work stress and working conditions that were considered particularly challenging. She also noted that colleges and universities were not putting out enough candidates. Finally, the issue of labor unions was a major concern of hers.

Influence of Background Experiences and Training

Finding #7: Human Resources Leaders making strong progress in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project had backgrounds in the business world and no background in curriculum and instruction. Additionally, they found significant value in having tools provided by the Project that define their key work, the levers for change, and the metrics for performance.

Part of the context of this study was to ask these three Human Resources Leaders what value the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project brought to their work. The researcher found that all three of them indicated that reform partners, like the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project, brought significant learning to their work. They were asked to consider the project and identify the top one or two support strategies that helped them in their work. All three of them strongly agreed that the major tools of the project, which define the key levers of work around recruitment, selection, placement, performance management, and support, were the most important part of the project because the tools defined their work and the metrics they should be collecting and utilizing. Leader A summarized it well when she said, “For me, clearly, the framework of thinking about setting goals and then identifying metrics and benchmarks was huge.” Additionally,

all three of them identified the on-the-ground support provided by leaders in the field was invaluable as a way to ensure effective implementation of the work.

Finally, the researcher found several interesting elements of the three Leaders' background experiences that warrant further investigation. All three of them met the research study criteria of being in their roles for two years, implementing the work of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project deeply as determined by the metrics for the project, and having leadership roles outside of the school system. In addition, it was interesting to note that none of them had any prior experience in the areas of curriculum and instruction, and they all had past experience in interest-based negotiations. Even though they did not have personal on-the-job experience teaching in or leading a school, they all demonstrated familiarity with issues related to curriculum and instruction because they sit on the Executive Teams in their respective school districts, and they are involved as decisions are made about strategies related to teaching and learning. The relationship between what a Human Resources Leaders needs to have experienced directly related to teaching and learning and what they can learn from others in the field warrants further discussion. Additionally, they all had experience with negotiations in their previous roles, and in this study they spoke most directly to their work related to interest-based rather than position-based negotiations. Finally, they all spoke extensively about the importance of having metrics of performance which is aligned with the research about how the new approach to Human Capital Management must be focused on collecting, reporting, and acting on performance metrics to optimize results (Stanton & Masko, 2010).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for policy and practice related to defining the role of the high quality teacher and principal, which was most important to the three Leaders. Also, identifying the best fit for those who are selected to lead Human Resources Departments, and ways to ensure that the context for the work is supportive have implications.

It is a long-standing belief that the quality of teachers and principals is important for improving student achievement in schools (Rivkin et al, 2005; Sanders & Horn, 1998). Comments from participants in this study suggest that there is a growing focus on defining the role of the high quality teacher beyond the NCLB legislation, and positioning Human Resources Departments as a foundational component for ensuring that high quality teachers and principals are recruited and retained in urban school settings. As identified in the research, Human Resources and Human Capital Management is in the nascent stages of development (Curtis & Wurzel, 2010; Odden, 2011).

Piecemeal reform efforts have been developed around teacher and principal effectiveness, and the U.S. Department of Education has been providing funds to state agencies for competitive grants to study promising practices (Zavatsky, 2009). Reform-minded non-profit organizations have recently provided funding to further work in this area. The Wallace and Gates Foundations are currently providing grants to determine the most promising work around principal manager effectiveness; however, very limited funding has been earmarked to identify effective Human Resources practices. Recently, the work of Odden (2011), Stanton and Matsko

(2010), and Stein & Curtis (2010) has focused on the evolution of Human Capital Management in the research and this has transformed from teachers meeting basic requirements to a much more nuanced view of the powerful role of Human Resources.

Findings from this study were used to identify a number of strategies that urban school districts and Human Resource leaders may find conducive to improving teacher and leader quality in their districts. First, districts should clearly define desirable competencies and motivations of urban school teachers and principals to convey when recruiting future teachers and principals. Urban districts could also support action research to determine the competencies and motivations of those highly effective teachers and principals to inform future work around continuously redefining core competencies that should be a part of teacher and principal education programs. Work around developing teacher and leader frameworks is occurring across the country (CPRE, 2009), and these frameworks could be informed by identifying teacher and principal practitioners who are achieving results. For teachers, the work of TNTP (2012) and reform-minded non-profits like New Leaders (Martorell, Heaton, Gates, and Hamilton, 2010) can inform evolving definitions of the roles of teachers and principals in urban school settings. These role definitions can inform the practices of recruitment and selection. As these definitions of competencies and motivations become clearer, they can also inform the work of colleges, universities, and non-traditional pathways for preparing future teachers and principals.

Second, urban school districts should consider broadening the scope and experience that school systems seek in candidates for Human Resources Leadership positions to include candidates who have had leadership experiences outside of the curriculum and instruction area. The work of Boudreau and Ramstad (2007) can inform how business practices in Human Capital Management can inform the work of school districts. Additionally, these three Human Resources Leaders spoke strongly about the importance of the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project in informing their work. Therefore, colleges, universities, and reform organizations should continue structuring learning opportunities for Human Resources Leaders to work in cohort groups to study effective practices, complete action research, and continuously improve their work around recruitment and retention. This can inform the curricula of colleges and universities as they develop masters and doctoral level work in the field of Human Capital Management.

Finally, the participants in this study noted that they faced a number of policy-related barriers to recruiting and retaining talented teachers and leaders in their districts. Therefore, local, state, and federal agencies should work to identify and minimize barriers related to performance management and compensation that ultimately impede the selection and retention of the most highly effective teachers and leaders in urban school districts. Relatively recent research related to improving teacher compensation and career paths (Frank & Gordon, 2013) should be shared with federal, state and local agencies, and used to inform assessments of current policies.

Recommendations for Future Research

There has been limited research about Human Capital Management in the educational setting; however there has been growing interest in this topic in recent years (Stanton & Matsko, 2010; Curtis & Wurzel, 2010; Knapp et al., 2010; Milankowski & Kimball, 2010; Odden, 2011;). The paradigm of recruiting and retaining effective employees is embedded in the business world (Boudreau & Ramsted, 2007); however, it has been studied much less in the educational field. Human Resources and Human Capital Management are emerging fields in education with a particular focus on effective teachers and a more recent focus on effective principals. Ongoing studies that examine the field of Human Resources and Human Capital Management within the education sector can contribute to increased student achievement in all schools and, in particular, urban school districts (Odden, 2011).

This study was limited by the size of the sample and its focus on Human Resources Leaders in a particular cohort group and who have specific background experiences. In this study, a set of strategic actions was identified in the second year of a reform effort. In order to understand more fully the role of Human Resources in urban school settings to seek promising practices for recruitment and selection of teachers and principals, suggestions for future research include continuing this study after the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project has been completed. Extending this study would provide additional insights into the impact of practices for the improvement of the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and principals over time.

Additionally, another area of future research could be examining the strategic actions of Human Resources Leaders in suburban and rural schools to see which effective improvement actions are applicable in the urban school setting. Finally, since this research study focused on Human Resources Leaders who do not have a background in teaching or serving as principals, a next step could be to complete similar studies designed to get the perspectives of Human Resources Leaders who do have experiences as highly effective teachers and principals to determine if there are similarities and differences of effective actions and practices.

Conclusion

The findings from this study identify the high impact actions of three Human Resources Leaders from urban school districts engaged in the Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project. This study evolves from the importance of recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers and principals in our most disadvantaged schools in urban school districts (Odden, 2011). Based on a review of the literature and the results of this study, several themes emerged and recommendations were made for follow-up. The Human Resources Leaders indicated that having a clear district goal and strategy drive the work of Human Resources to design the roles of high quality teachers and principals and select candidates who have the competencies and motivations that match the role expectations. They identified numerous strategies for recruitment and retention that are promising in urban school districts, and noted that having a context that supports strong selection, performance management, and compensation of high quality candidates will improve the conditions for students in urban school settings (Odden, 2011).

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Message

Dear Human Resources Leader,

You are receiving this email because you are a Human Resources Leader in an urban school district participating in the [Urban Schools Human Resources Improvement Project].

I am inviting you to participate in a research project to examine and compare the behaviors and practices of Human Resource Leaders who promote the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals in their districts; and to examine their perceptions of policies and practices that have supported this work. This study will serve as the basis of my doctoral dissertation. I hope that findings from this research will inform administrators and policymakers about strategic human capital practices in urban districts.

This study will be conducted through a 60-90 minute interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and all participant information shared will remain confidential. If you wish to participate in this study, please reply to confirm your interest.

If you have any questions, please contact me at darlene.merryconsulting@gmail.com. My advisor for this research is Dr. Carol S. Parham, and she can be contacted at cparham@umd.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Darlene Merry

Appendix B: Interview Questions and Corresponding Themes

1. *Organizational Strategy*: What is the organizational strategy (i.e., the district's major instructional improvement efforts) that drives the selection of teachers and principals?
2. *Role Design*: When you think about hiring principals and teachers to affect positive change related to the organizational strategy, what are the key elements of their role design for those in key roles to execute the strategy?
3. *Competencies and Motivations*: What are the major knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers and principals that you look for in your Human Resources efforts?
4. *Context*: What major contextual issues do you face around issues related to state policy, teacher associations, the external labor market, and your major supply sources such as colleges, universities, and reform groups?
5. *Talent Acquisition*: What actions have you implemented to acquire the best talent?
6. *Talent Development and Motivation*: What actions have you implemented to develop your talent pool?
7. *Talent Retention*: What actions have you utilized to retain your most talented teachers and principals?
8. *What are the most impactful actions you have used in the following areas*:
 - a. Recruitment:
 - b. Selection/Placement:
 - c. Induction/Mentoring:

d. Professional Development:

e. Performance Management:

f. Compensation:

Program/Personnel Questions:

9. When you consider the Urban School Human Resources Improvement Project, what are the top 1-2 support strategies that helped you with your improvement efforts?
10. What are the 2-3 behaviors you have personally demonstrated that have had the most impact in your school district?
11. How has your previous experience as a leader outside of public education helped you to implement these actions?

Bibliography

- Abrams, L.M. & Madaus, G.F. (2003). The lessons of high stakes testing.
Educational Leadership, 61(3), 31-35.
- Berry, B., Montgomery, D., Curtis, R.E., Hernandez, M, Wurtzel, J. & Snyder, J.
(2010). Creating and Sustaining Urban Teacher Residencies in *Teaching
Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Boudreau, J.W. & Ramstad, P.M. (2007). *Beyond HR: The new science of human
capital*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing.
- Burhauser, S., Gates, S.M, Hamilton, L.S., & Ikemoto, G.S. (2012). *First-year
principals in urban school districts: how actions and working conditions
relate to outcomes*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Chenoweth, K. (2007). *It's being done: Academic success in unexpected schools*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clifton, J. (2011) *The Coming Jobs War*. New York: Gallup Press.
- Colvin, R. (2007). Beyond buzz: Leadership is moving to the heart of school reform.
Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform. 8-16.
- Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). (2009). Taking Human Capital
Seriously: Talented Teachers in Every Classroom, Talented Principals in
Every School. Philadelphia, PA.
- Cotton, K. (2003). Principals and student achievement: What the research says.
Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Curtis, R.E. & Wurtzel, J. (eds). (2010). *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Danielson, C. & McGreal, T.L. (2000). *Teacher Evaluation to Enhance Professional Practice*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- DuFour, R. (2002). The learning-centered principal. *Educational Leadership*, 59 (8), 12-15.
- Duke, D. L. (2004, Sep/Oct). The turnaround principal: High-stakes leadership. *Principal Magazine*. 84 (1), 12-23.
- Egan, K. (2003). Testing what for what? *Educational Leadership*, 61(3), 27-30.
- Elmore, R. F. (2003, April). Doing the right thing, knowing the right thing to do: Low-performing schools and performance-based accountability. Paper presented to the National Governors Association Policy Education Advisors Institute, Los Angeles, CA.
- Frank, S. & Gordon, J. (2013, July). First Steps: What School Systems Can do Right Now to Improve Teacher Compensation and Career Path. *Education Resource Strategies*. Retrieved August 1, 2013, from http://myemail.constantcontact.com/What-You-Can-Do-Now-to-Transform-Schools.html?soid=1102100306252&aid=Ba-y6B6_usU.
- Haberman, M. (1995). *Star Teachers of Children in Poverty*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Kappa Delta Pi.

- Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. (1996). "The principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of methodological issues, 1980-1995" in K. Leithwood, J. Chapman, D. Corson, P. Hallinger, and A. Weaver-Hart (eds.), *The International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration*. New York: Kluwer.
- Hanushek, E. & Lindseth, A. (2009). *Schoolhouses, courthouses, and statehouses: Solving the funding-achievement puzzle in America's public schools*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hanushek, E.A. & Rivkin, S.G. (2010). The quality and distribution of teachers under the No Child Left Behind Act. *Journal of Economic Perspectives.*, 24(3), p.133-150.
- Heneman, H.G., III, & Milanowski, A.T. (2007). *Assessing Human Resource Alignment: The Foundation for Building Total Teacher Quality Improvement*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Kane, T.J.; Rockoff, J.E.; & Staiger, D.O. (2008). What Does Certification Tell Us About Teacher Effectiveness? Evidence from New York City. *Economics of Education Review*, 27(6), 615-631
- Kimball, S.M. (2011). Principals: Human capital managers at every school. *Kappan Magazine*, 92(7), p. 13-18.
- Knapp, M.S.; Copland, M.A.; Honig, M.I.; Plecki, M.L., and Portin, B.S. (2010). *Learning-focused Leadership and Leadership Support: Meaning and Practice*

- in Urban Systems. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- Kozol, J. (2007). *Letters to a young teacher*. New York, NY: Crown.
- Leithwood, K.; Louis, K.S.; Anderson, S. & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- Levin, J & Quinn, M. (2003). Missed opportunities: How we keep high-quality teachers out of urban classrooms. Annie E. Casey Foundation: Baltimore, MD.
- Luebchow, L. (2009). Equitable Resources in Low Income Schools: Teacher Equity and the Federal Title I Comparability Requirement. Washington, DC: New America Foundation.
- Martorell, F., Heaton, P., Gates, S.M., and Hamilton, L.S. (2010) Preliminary Findings from the New Leaders for New Schools Evaluation, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, WR-739-NLNS.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milanowski, T. & Kimball, S. (2010). The Principal as Human Capital Manager. Teaching Talent: a visionary framework for human capital in education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Murphy, J. S., Elliott, E., Goldring, & Porter, A. (2006). *Learning-centered Leadership: A Conceptual Framework*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2012). NAEP – Trial Urban District Assessment. Retrieved from <http://nationsreportcard.gov/tuda.aspx> July 20, 2013.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2013). Trial Urban District Assessments. Retrieved from http://nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_tuda_2013/#/.

New Leaders for New Schools. (2013). Retrieved August 10, 2013 from <http://www.newleaders.org/>

Odden, A. (2011). *Strategic management of human capital in education: Improving instructional practice and student learning in schools*. New York: Routledge.

Odden, A. (2011). Manage Human Capital Strategically. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(7), p. 8-12.

Padulla, J.J. (2003) State-mandated testing: what do teachers think? *Educational Leadership*, 61(3), 42-46.

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Platt, A.D., Tripp, C.E., Fraser, R.G., Warnock, J.R., & Curtis, R.E. (2008). *Skillful Leader II: Confronting Conditions that Undermine Learning*. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching.

Plecki, M.L., Knapp, M.S., Castaneda, T., Halverson, T., LaSota, R., & Lockmiller, C. (2009). How Leaders Invest Staffing Resources for Leading Improvement. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.

- Portin, B.S., Knapp, M.S., Dareff, S., Feldman, S., Russell, F.A., Samuelson, C., & Yeh, T. L. (2009). *Leadership for learning improvement in urban schools*. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- Rhines Cheney, G., Davis, J., Garrett, K., and Holleran, J. (2010). A New Approach to Principal Preparation: Innovative Programs Share their Practice and Lesson Learned. Fort Worth, TX: Rainwater Leadership Alliance.
- Rice, J.K. (2010). Principal Effectiveness and Leadership in an Era of Accountability: What Research Says. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Rivkin, S. Hanushek, E. & Kane, J. (2005). Teachers, Schools and Academic Achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458.
- Rockoff, J.E. (2004). The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from panel data. *American Economic Review*, 92(2), 247-252.
- Rong, Y. (2011, July 8). Let's Aim Beyond Standards. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/07/08/36rong.html?qs=july+8,+2011>
- Saphier, J., Haley-Speca, M.A., & Gower, R. (2008). *The Skillful Teacher*. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching.
- Schwartz, R., Hernandez, M. & Ngo, J. (2010). Attracting and Retaining Strong Teachers: A Model of High Support and High Accountability in *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Smart, B. (2005). *Topgrading*. Strand, London: Penguin Group.

- Stanton, L.B. & Matsko, K.K. (2010). Using Data to Support Human Capital Development in School Districts: Measures to Track the Effectiveness of Teachers and Principals in *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Stein, S.J. & Curtis, R. E. (2010). Principals as Leaders of Learning: A Redefinition of Skills and Responsibilities in *Teaching Talent: A Visionary Framework for Human Capital in Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- The New Teacher Project (TNTP). (2012). The Irreplaceables: Understanding The Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools. Brooklyn, NY.
- Tuttle, C.C., Teh, B., Nichols-Barrer, I., Gill, B.P., & Gleason, P. (2010). Student characteristics and achievement in 22 KIPP middle schools. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research. Retrieved August 5, 2013, from http://www.mathematicampr.com/publications/pdfs/education/kipp_fnlrpt.pdf
- Weber, R.P. (1990). *Basic Content Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yettick, H. 3/1/14. Study Links Teacher 'Grit' with Effectiveness and Retention. *Education Week Blog*. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2014/03/gritty_teachers.html.
- Yin, R. K. (1995). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zavadsky, H. (2009). *Bringing School Reform to Scale: Five Award-Winning Urban School Districts*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.